

Schizophrenia – Prologue

From a certain estate's maid's diary.

Today was another long day that couldn't have ended sooner. It's been three years today since I started working at this estate, but the work here still feels just as harsh. The lord and lady here are kind and gentle people, but mistress here is a relentlessly unreasonable person. While yelling at the slightest displeasure, her fist would be the next thing to follow. I'm just a nice maid girl who can only smile politely while receiving such abuse.

Such a mistress was for some reason acting quite strange on this day. Not to say that she suddenly turned nice, or timid. It could only be described as... "strange".

From the instant she opened her eyes till the moment she turned in for the night, she was incessantly murmuring strange things to herself. As I was staring puzzled and worried at such a sight, a sudden shout would escape her lips. And even more strangely, such a shout was not actually aimed at us maids this time, and the mistress seemed to suddenly come to her senses and turned away as if escaping from our glances.

It was as if the girl before today was a lie. If the case was that we had failed to meet some sort of expectation, we would surely be blamed. If we touch upon something that we shouldn't be getting involved with, we would also be blamed. Thus, after much consultation, we maids decided to not get involved with the strangeness of the mistress's behaviour today.

And so, for the whole day, the mistress's strangeness only stood out more and more. Always talking to herself, suddenly shouting out. We maids, trying to pay no mind to such things, it took our utmost simply trying to respond normally when called upon.

At the end of the day, the mistress simply quietly went to bed without uttering another word. Looking back on it, other than the eccentric behaviour, today was certainly much more peaceful than usual.

In a room lined with extravagant decorations, the space was filled with various furniture. All of this was forcibly gathered by the master of the room. Through trickery, threats, and sometimes calling upon father's authority, all of these things were taken and collected in this room.

At a corner of this room, the master here was in fact fallen prostrate on a large table. Sporting long blonde hair and an extravagant dress, a girl who looked no more than fifteen years of age sat exhausted at the table. With a drained expression plastering her features, she seemed to be grumbling, muttering about something all by herself. Things like “why did this have to happen” and “it’s really so annoying” escaped her incessantly moving lips.

—Well, well, let’s calm down okay?

What resounded in her head was the voice of a young woman. This voice that could only be heard by the girl, had for the entire day been unceasingly brandishing her suddenly new found vocals at the girl.

—Heey, don’t ignore me, Lilia.

Lilia confronted the girl calling out to her, and furiously stood up.

“Enough is enough! You can’t do this, or you can’t do that! Who gave you the right to tell me what to do!”

—No no, I wasn't particularly giving you orders right? It was simply advice.

The voice, no matter how enraged Lilia became, continued to keep a calm tone of conversation. On the contrary, the voice seemed to be quite cheerful.

“In the first place, what is your advice even supposed to mean? I've asked you countless times, but I still have no idea!”

—Haven't I answered that question every time you've asked me? At this rate, you are walking towards your own destruction you know. Meaning total ruin yeah? I'm here to defend you from such a future, and save your neck you know?

“Ha! Ruin? Don't make me laugh. I haven't done anything wrong right? Besides, how could a duke's clan fall so easily?”

The girl was the eldest daughter of a duke's family. Other than the royal family, anyone would think twice about confronting their influence. At the very least in the current generation, their power was second only to the crown prince.

In such a scenario, it was unthinkable for the duke's clan to collapse.

“Why do you even proclaim to know of such things anyways.”

—Why? Well... I'm an angel who can see into the future. You should be grateful.

“Well, I wonder what my plans for tomorrow are.”

—Ignoring me, how could you! Okay okay I'm not actually an angel, but I really can see a little bit of the future you know!

She may have had an aloof character, but that one line was tinged in seriousness. Lilia was surprised deep inside, and it also showed on her disgusted expression at her own next words.

“If you insist on it that much, then at least show me some sort of evidence that your predictions are accurate. If you can prove it to me...well, I'll be able to have a little confidence towards this voice in my head.”

Lilia assured herself that such a thing was indeed impossible. Certainly this voice was a strange entity, but even so something like foresight should be impossible. However, the voice was delighted at Lilia's words and laughed.

—Really? It's a promise okay! Here we go...

The voice, seemingly deep in thought about something, fell silent for a while. A small breath leaked out after a long awaited respite from all the noise. While waiting like that, before long the voice returned.

—Here I go, a prediction of two years from now. The season is the beginning of spring, probably.

“That's quite far into the future. I'll say this now but, saying I told you so later on will not make me recognise your ability.”

—Yeah, okay. After all, there shouldn't be any problems.

Insisting so much on such a thing, will it really prove true come two years? Lilia was innocently interested in hearing about it, waiting for what came next. The voice cleared her throat and said this.

—During the spring of two years into the future, entering your senior year of schooling, you will experience the wrath of the crown prince, earning his hatred.

“Wha-...!”

Lilia’s eyes widened in astonishment. The crown prince was her fiancée. To become hated by the prince, what could be the meaning of this?

“There are limits to nonsense you know...”

Wrath entered Lilia’s voice. But the voice that resounded through her head paid it no heed, and seemed to be enjoying herself after all.

—Of course I understand that. It would be great for you if it turned out false, so there’s no need to get angry right?

It was certainly so, thought Lilia. She had confidence that nothing would come of this prediction. And when it does prove false, this voice will definitely go away too. Lilia nodded in agreement.

“Well then, until we find out the result, please do be silent, agreed?”

—Alright, though I’ll be quite lonely... But, well. Of course. It’d be troubling if my words were simply ignored all the time, so I’ll be quiet.

The way those words were said seemed to catch something in her mind, but instead of dwelling on that uncomfortable feeling the conversation continued.

“Well then, farewell. Please don’t ever come out again.”

—Hey that really hurts. Well, I get it. Good bye. Let’s speak again in two years’ time.

Lilia frowned at the unpleasantness of the parting laughter of the voice, as it fell silent.

After that, the mysterious voice that followed her all day could be heard no longer. The words of the voice continued to bother her for a while, but in just a month the very existence of that voice was forgotten.

And so the spring of two years later came.

And with it a declaration from the prince that his engagement-

-was officially annulled.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 1

So yeah this took forever... still for some reason I did it, even though it's now 2AM over here and I probably could have spent my time better in prep for all the things I need to do tomorrow.

This hasn't been edited either since I'm certainly not staying up even later for such a thing so I'll leave that for Este, or myself later.

Oh well, whatever, friendship is beautiful and all that. Enjoy this first chapter!

The large room was furnished with an extravagant bed and various other furniture. No matter where you looked, only items of the highest grade could be found here. All of these weren't simply decorations either, and were all things actually used by the owner of the room. Even the carpet spread under the bed was a product of unimaginable value.

And in that room which could draw the envy of any commoner, sat a very troubled looking girl. Words such as "why", and "how did this happen" were the only things that came from the girl, quietly mumbling to herself in distress. Her face dyed in despair, dark shadows could be clearly seen around her eyes. The long blonde hair she took pride in lay in severe disarray from the obvious lack of care.

The person on her mind right now was none other than this country's crown prince. When she had heard that the prince had showed interest in another woman, she went to the school for nobles to see the woman for herself. Bearing an ephemeral image, the woman turned out to be a quiet-looking girl. She had scoffed at the idea that such a girl could draw the interest of the prince, but experienced first hand the impossible sight of the prince calling out to speak with the girl, even showing the girl a smile of his that she herself never had the privilege to see before.

And so she began her harassment of the girl. Without putting up any form of resistance, the girl quietly received the persistent bullying of her and her followers. As a consequence of her high position as a duke's daughter, the girl seemed doomed to suffer without anyone being able to come to her aid. The prince certainly could have saved her from the situation, but it seemed as if the prince was trying to avoid this duke's daughter.

However, such a situation could not hope to last forever. The prince had happened upon a scene during her harassment, and what's more even witnessed the moment she raised her hand against the girl. The prince was as a result enraged by the scene, and furiously condemned her behaviour, thus saying this.

—I will have nothing further to do with you. I will get my father's approval, and wipe away our engagement.

She despaired. She clung to the prince's feet, and begged for her forgiveness. Thinking back on it, that was probably the first and final chance of her redemption.

—The target of your apologies should be someone else, no?

With those words, the prince shook her off, and left taking the girl with him.

Those were the events of the previous week. Since then, she had secluded herself inside her room.

The hours were pointlessly wasted away. Even though she felt that she had to do something, she could only sit in despair. For her, the willpower to do anything had long left her body. Today similarly ended without anything having been accomplished. As the night dragged on, something stirred from a corner of her memory,

—Bonjour~ Gooood morning good evening! It's been a while hasn't it, Lilia.

At the sudden voice ringing throughout her head, Lilia threw up her face in surprise. Though she look all around, not a soul could be seen in her surroundings. All there was was her room which had returned to silence.

—Ahaha, where are you looking?

At the sound of the young woman's voice, Lilia's memories from two years ago surfaced. It was a voice she was familiar with in the past. And it was this voice that had actually predicted the prince's wrath.

“Where are you...?”

—I'm both here and not here. I've always been by your side! Your very own guardian angel, here to lead you down the path to happiness!

“Did you come to laugh in my face or something?”

—Woah ho ho, someone's in a bad mood. But, well, it couldn't be helped yeah? Sorry 'bout that, being all weird and all.

The latter voice seemed to have actual regret mixed in, a downhearted response. At such a drastic shift in attitude, Lilia couldn't help but allow a small smile to float onto her face as she relaxed her expression. If you were going to get depressed at your own foolishness, then don't be like that in the first place, Lilia thought as she replied.

“It seems the future has gone down the path you predicted after all. If only I had properly listened to your words back then, I wonder if this situation could have been avoided?”

—It's pretty useless to think about such things now. You had zero intention of listening to what I had to say back then after all. That's why it was actually important to go through all this so that you would finally heed my words.

“In the end the price I had to pay to be able to finally trust you was pretty steep...”

Lilia sighed with deep emotion. Perhaps troubled at how to respond, the voice fell silent for a while. As some time passed in silence, Lilia began to worry if the voice was already gone for good.

—Sorry, I'm not really good at this whole being sensitive and encouraging with my words thing.

Lilia slightly widened her eyes at the sound of that dejected voice. This was originally what I'd brought upon myself, so what is she doing being all considerate now.

—Lilia. I want to help you. That's why, won't you please listen to what I have to say, even a little?

Towards the earnest voice, Lilia could only give a wry smile, as she lightly nodded her assent.

“Wasn’t that the original promise? I put my full faith into your words. Though, I wonder if someone like me can really be saved after all? Will I be able to make amends with his highness?”

—Well... Instead of answering such a question, is it okay if I give one more prediction?

Lilia narrowed her eyes slightly in doubt, while urging the voice to go on.

—Well then well then... Ahem. You were depressed for a week. In this following week, you will think about your situation. What you did wrong, what you must do to make things better, and so on. And you will come to a conclusion. That you in fact did nothing wrong. That everyone else was at fault here.

“Wha...! Even for me that’s a little...!”

—Yep. The you who’s calmed down can certainly say that now. Let me continue. You will return to the academy. On your usual route, you will be even more conceited than usual. And the result of that...

The voiced stopped her words at that point. Lilia gulped in anticipation as she waited for the voice to continue.

—You will, let alone the Prince or the King, garner the wrath of the entire country. With that, even being from the duke’s family won’t allow you to get away with a simple “sorry”. Deprived of your peerage, your family will be cast down into the commoner’s realm.

“Is that all?” was what she thought. Certainly the King of this country had the authority to do such a thing, but in reality stripping a duke of his peerage was unheard of. Or that’s how it was supposed to be.

—There, imagine, Lilia. The duke’s family that had known only a noble’s life until then, suddenly cast down into the world of commoners. ...Though, it’s probably impossible for you to imagine such a thing huh...

Just as the voice said, for Lilia it was impossible to know about the way commoners lived their lives. Though, what’s for certain is that it’d be impossible to lead the life of luxury which you’ve been living until now. No one in the family would be able to get used to such a life. Perhaps one might even be driven to commit suicide.

With those thoughts, a certain doubt inadvertently began to seep into Lilia. The talk up till now had been about Lilia’s family, so why was there no mention of Lilia herself? As one could more or less guess the answer to that, the voice, somehow bearing both a cheerful and compassionate tone, said thus.

—You don’t need to worry about yourself anymore at that point. After all, you’d already have been executed.

Hearing that, Lilia’s head went pure blank.

Executed?

Who?

Me?

Why?

—What you had done, well I'll just keep quiet about that part. There's no need for you to know.

At the poor, fragile appearance of Lilia as her face fell ashen, the voice took on a warm, gentle tone.

—Well then, Lilia. Here's the big question. It's not my intention to just let you die, you know. To make sure you don't go down the wrong "route", I'll be here to advise you along the way. Just, it's not like I have that much life experience either, so we should probably do our best and think things through together... What do you say, Lilia?

Sparing but a moment's thought, Lilia immediately came to her conclusion.

"Please...Lend me your strength..."

A weak, faint voice that seemed as if it was disappearing. To that voice from Lilia, came an answer.

—Yep... Leave it to me, Lilia! I'll be sure to save you!

At the sound of that strong, determined voice, Lilia's warm tears streamed silently down her face.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 2

The next day.

After the her reunion with the voice in her head, Lilia had at some point passed out, probably due to having finally calmed down after a week of distress. Having woken, Lilia looked outside, as the bright morning sunlight streamed in from window. As the prospect that last night could very well have all been a dream crept into her mind, Lilia was starting to feel crestfallen once again when-

—Mornin', Lilia.

At that voice's carefree morning greeting, Lilia felt relief from the bottom of her heart.

"Good morning. Come to think of it, I still haven't gotten your name yet."

—Eh? Ahh, my name, huh... Well, you can just call me Sakura.

"Sakura, is it? Alright. Well then Sakura, for now, what should my next actions be?"

—That's right. It's time for your morning greetings! Out to the halls! The maids would be your first targets!

Lilia's eyes went round in astonishment, and an unpleasant frown quickly surfaced on her face. Why she should have to give greetings to the lowly servants here, was the question that both of them knew to be running through Lilia's mind. Sakura let out a small sigh and said frankly.

—Lilia. The problem here is your attitude of looking down on everyone else. Do you understand that?

"Well that... may, be the case... But if anything there shouldn't be a need to even flatter the maids is there!"

Even without a temperament like Lilia's, most nobles would still have cold attitudes towards their servants. To the servants of this country, just serving a master with an indifferent attitude towards them would be considered a blessing. Lilia herself was certainly aware that she possessed a severe personality, but she had no intention of reforming her attitude towards her servants. But Sakura only gave an exaggerated sigh.

—Lilia. What would you think if a good friend of yours mistreated their servants?

"That it must suck to have useless maids?"

—I was an idiot for asking you after all!

What should I do, Sakura lamented. Lilia remained dubious as she stood before the door, waiting for Sakura's next words. Before long, Sakura, with a small nod and an "Alright", said this.

—I give up on trying to explain it to you! Hey, Lilia. I want to help you.

At the sudden change of topic, Lilia tilted her head.

—Do you still not trust me?

"Honestly, I'm still not completely certain of my trust in you. But for now I've already decided to follow your words."

—Then do as I said.

“Muu...”

Lilia understood, and accepted the fact in her heart. That Sakura had a clear reason behind her instructions, even if she couldn't put it into words very well. Since it couldn't be helped, she wouldn't force herself in thinking about it. Lilia gave a small nod.

She opened the door. At that moment, what immediately came into view was the face of a maid.

“Ah...”

It was a girl around the same age as her. Lilia widened her eyes, and spoke with a voice devoid of emotion.

“You, standing around outside of someone's room like that, what might I ask are you doing...?”

Though it wasn't on purpose, her voice was cold and low. Consequently, the maid in front of her shook in fright as her eyes darted every which way, her mouth repeatedly flapped open and closed in panic. Angered by such an response Lilia prepared to speak out again.

—Wah! Hold up, hooold up! Lilia, down! Sit!

As Sakura shouted frantically, the words about to come out of Lilia's mouth turned into air and dispersed.

—Hey, you know, Lilia. With the way you are usually, you'd get angry at the maids if they were even a little bit late in responding to your summons right? That's why the maids, they probably always keep someone posted on stand by outside your room. Especially since you've been in an abnormal state recently, they're probably feeling quite worried about you, yeah?

Lilia's eyes widened in disbelief. While she herself felt there was no fault with the attitude she took with them, she certainly shouldn't be someone who the maids looked fondly upon. Despite that, to think that they were worried about her, it was something that would have never crossed her mind.

—Of course, the same can't be said for all of them. Not wanting to incur your anger, some people only begrudgingly take their posts out here, but among the maids there are girls like her here who are genuinely worried for your well being you know. You've gotta treasure these people more.

That's why, you should treat them nicely, okay?

Sakura's tone was overflowing with earnestness. Taking in those words, Lilia sorted out these feelings swirling inside of her. Returning her sight to the maid once more, Lilia found the girl gazing up at her with upturned eyes.

“Umm... I am terribly sorry, mistress.”

Said the maid with her head lowered in apology. The maid kept her head lowered in that state.

Perhaps she was waiting for my response, thought Lilia. “How dare you raise your head without my approval!” was probably something I've yelled in anger before. A naturally wrathful temperament, isn't it.

“Don’t mind it. I just got a little worked up. Sorry about that.”

The moment those words came out of Lilia’s mouth, the maid before her raised her face with vigor. Her eyes opened wide as she stared at Lilia. At the unexpected reaction from the maid, Lilia involuntarily took a step back.

“Mistress!”

“Wha, what is it?”

“Are you feeling unwell?! Did you eat something strange?! Please wait here, rest assured I’ll go and bring the doctor immediately! So, please, let us quickly return to your room!”

“Hold up. What are you talking about?”

Lilia narrowed her eyes in displeasure at the excessive comments being hurled at her. But, the maid before her did not cease her actions, and continued to repeat that Lilia must please return to her room, that she’ll immediately find a doctor, and so on. In the end, after much time was wasted, Lilia finally managed to convince the girl that everything was alright.

And while all this was going on, Lilia never noticed the fact that Sakura was enjoying herself, laughing away at such a spectacle.

After having soothed Miss “Please return to your room!”, following Sakura’s instructions, Lilia decided to head out to the garden for now. While walking with the maid following behind, her feet were halted by a call of “please wait”, that came from the maid.

“What is it?”

“What shall we do about your change of clothes?”

Until it was mentioned just now, this fact had completely slipped her mind. What Lilia had on at the moment was the uniform she wore for the academy. Since the day the crown prince had revoked their engagement, Lilia had yet to change out of these clothes. Right as that fact surfaced, the resulting odour too surfaced along with it.

—That’s some serious funk, Lilia.

At Sakura who said this while playing dumb about the whole situation, Lilia reflexively shouted in retort.

“If you knew all along then tell me sooner!”

Startled, the maid before Lilia started to tremble furiously. She hastily lowered her head, apologising with “I am terribly sorry”. Even in Lilia’s eyes, the figure of the trembling maid seemed quite pitiful. Feeling apologetic, Lilia spoke somewhat frantically.

“That’s not it. Those words weren’t actually directed at you. So, don’t be so scared, okay…”

—Well, that girl is definitely thinking right about now. That there really isn’t anyone here but her.

Lilia’s cheeks twitched. She was on the verge of yelling out again, but seeing that the only one in front of her was the maid, the figure that belonged to the voice Lilia heard was certainly nowhere to be seen.

Yelling again would only serve to further frighten the maid.

Lilia would not usually care about a maid's feelings, but she just could not bring herself to coldly ignore the feelings of the girl who had shown that she truly cared for her master. Lilia was even a little surprised, deep down, that she could have such thoughts.

—Aww, by the way, even if you don't say it out loud, I can still hear all the mutterings of your heart you know~

—These feelings, just express them from the start, silly!

Though she was starting to question whether she really should have trusted such a voice, Lilia had already decided to believe in Sakura. Simply put, going back on her words was something that went against Lilia's nature. Heaving a large sigh, she turned to face the maid before her.

With a pale, fearful face, the maid also peeked up at the situation of her master with upturned eyes. Letting out a small sigh, with unpracticed facial muscles Lilia attempted to form a smile. Receiving the awkward, crude smile only added to the maid's fright, but Lilia paid no mind to that detail. As a matter of course, Sakura was kept busy trying her best not to laugh at the scene.

"I'll be heading out to the garden for a bit of fresh air. But, as you said, I, well, that is... It stinks right?"

At Lilia's words, the still nervous maid, timidly gave a reserved nod.

"Sorry but, could you prepare the bath for me?"

"Eh? Ah, yes!"

Lilia wore a dubious expression at the astonished maid's hurried reply, but paid no mind to it for now. The surprise change that, the Lilia who had commanded her servants with an iron tone had actually made a gentle request, was something that did not go unnoticed by Sakura after all. But she held off on doing something like pointing out this fact. After all, Sakura was already plenty occupied with simply trying to keep herself from bursting into laughter at this point.

"Ah, also. You, what's your name?"

To Lilia's question, the maid, still nervously hurried with her words, gives a reply.

"It's, Alisa."

"Alisa is it. I've got it. And your age?"

"I turn fifteen this year..."

"Is that so. Then you're a year younger than me huh."

Lilia nodded in satisfaction, and continued.

"I shall make you into my personal maid. Alright?"

"Eh? Ah, umm..."

Perhaps not understanding what Lilia had meant, it was clear to see that Alisa was in a state of panic. Lilia quickly realised the reason behind Alisa's hesitation.

“Ahh, that's right. First I'll have to get approval from Father. I'll confirm it with him later.”

“Eh, ahh... I understand. I look forward to your guidance.”

Seeing the deeply bowing Alisa, Lilia left with a satisfied smile painted across her face. Without looking back, she headed off towards the baths.

“By the way, Miss Sakura. Would you mind shutting up?”

—But...! Just... Ku, fufu, hehefu....!

Lilia proposed such to the Sakura who was desperately trying to hold in her unpleasant laughter.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 3

Sakura was the one amazed at Lilia's recent actions this time around. It was unbelievable that even without any intervention from Sakura, Lilia had made the young maid Alisa into her personal attendant. One had to wonder how this came to be. Such a thing happening was perplexing, as much as it was odd.

At hearing about becoming Lilia's personal maid, the expression on Alisa's face could only show that she was at a complete loss as to whether she should be overjoyed, or saddened at this fact. In fact, Alisa was originally hired to be Lilia's personal maid. Though, Lilia being how she is, this fact had completely left her mind immediately after Alisa's first introduction. Lilia having so easily forgotten about her brought Alisa some sadness, but she also felt happy that Lilia would now personally establish her as a personal maid.

Thinking back on Alisa's reaction back then, Sakura endlessly tried to bear with her urge to laugh out loud, and turned her mind towards the things to come.

Finishing with her bath, Lilia donned the dress Alisa had readied for her and set off outside the mansion accompanied by her maid. Even though Lilia said that she would be fine going alone, Alisa wouldn't budge in her decision to always accompany her master.

It seems she somewhat lacks self confidence.

The grounds around the mansion were lined with flowerbeds. It was the maids' responsibility to raise the flowers here, so all around, the flowerbeds were blooming with diverse blossoms reflecting the tastes of their various caretakers. The flowerbeds themselves were by no means organised in uniformity of any kind. Among them were plants of different seasons, and ones just sprouting their buds in the soil.

"Looking at it again... This, isn't there anything we can do about this? It's the first thing visitors will see upon entering the estate, so I think it's better if we pay attention to the appearance a bit more."

At Lilia's words, Alisa showed a troubled expression.

"This is something the lord here bestowed upon us... "Don't worry about it and just do as you like. Don't bother worrying about something trivial like its appearance." was what he said."

"Hmmm... So in other words, someone like me who actually pays attention to "trivial" matters such as appearance is just a narrow-minded woman right?"

"Eh? Tha, that's really not what I meant! Really!"

Really now, thought Lilia, as she turned her face away and proceeded into the garden. Behind her, Alisa followed along with her shoulders drooped.

—Lilia. Kindness. Did you suddenly forget how to be nice again?

—As if. I was just teasing her a little.

Even though it wasn't something that would bother her now, this girl named Alisa displayed such strong reactions to her emotions. Conversing with her became quite the amusing activity.

"Alisa. Which one is your flowerbed?"

“My flowerbed, you say? It’s much too boring. It’s better if you don’t...”

“Never mind that, just take me there already.”

“Uuu...As you wish...”

For some reason, it seems that Alisa was hesitant to show Lilia her flowerbed. While thinking it strange, pointing this out would only make her more averse to showing Lilia. Sakura was surprised but understood this, so she decided to keep silent.

Alisa showed Lilia the way as they advanced. Along the way, the numerous other servants they passed by were all wide eyed in surprise at the sight of Lilia and Alisa. Among them some were glancing back in worry for Alisa. It wasn’t as if Lilia had intended to devour the poor girl for lunch, but she made no move to explain the situation.

And so Alisa led her to their destination, near the back entrance of the estate. The entrance was mostly for the coming and going of servants and merchants. A bit to the side, was a small flowerbed.

“What is this. There’s nothing here.”

The flowerbed Alisa pointed to was filled with plain dirt. There weren’t even weeds growing there. Trying to explain, Alisa had a cramped expression as she responded.

“No, that is... I didn’t have any time, for it... Nothing was planted. I’ve thought to give it my best shot in the past but, everything always wilted...”

“Why don’t you have time for it? Are you saying that you’re the only one getting extra work?”

It wasn’t as if she was trying to help Alisa or anything, but if that was true then she would at least raise an objection with Alisa’s superior. She thought it would be fine to do at least that much.

But Alisa shook her head, and replied in a small voice.

“It’s, because I’m too slow. If only I could work skillfully like my seniors here...”

Somehow it seems like the problem lies with Alisa herself. Lilia couldn’t help but let out a sigh. What’s more, Alisa even said that her seniors were maintaining the flowerbed for her, preventing it from being overrun by weeds. So that it was ready to receive plants at any time, they took care of it for Alisa.

“Well then, do you have any intention of planting something?”

“No... I can’t say that I do...”

“Is that so.”

The conversation was cut off at that point. Uncertain about what Lilia was thinking as she stared at the empty plot, Alisa was restless as she fidgeted nervously. Though in the first place, there was no deeper meaning to Lilia’s observation of the flowerbed, as she was simply wondering whether something should be planted here after all.

—Lilia.

Sakura spoke. Lilia prompted her to continue through her silence.

—You should try raising some flowers together with Alisa. I’m sure she would be thrilled.

Lilia grimaced at the prospect, while the observing Alisa turned pale at seeing her master's sudden displeasure.

—No way. Seems like a pain.

While Lilia did appoint Alisa as her personal maid, she wasn't under the impression that they had become friends or anything. To put things frankly, it was simply convenient that from now on she'd have someone about the same age as her around. Nothing more, nothing less. Having this thought conveyed to her, Sakura sighed in disappointment.

—To hell with the reasoning. Lilia. Go with it.

This time it was Lilia's turn to sigh. She had no idea what good it would do, but she didn't want to go back on her word after promising to listen to Sakura's instructions. Reluctantly, Lilia turned to face the maid. She spoke to the intimidated Alisa.

"This flowerbed, there are no plans to use it anytime soon right?"

"Ah... Yes."

"Then I'll be taking it under my care."

At those sudden words, Sakura's breath got caught in her throat, while Alisa's mind went numb from astonishment. Coming to process those words little by little, Alisa started to become flustered in an amusing reaction. Simply staring at Alisa's condition, a while passed before the maid finally calmed down with a short sigh, and nodded in understanding.

"Since I have no plans to use it, this flowerbed will be entrusted to Mistress Lilia. I will take care of informing the Master."

"That will not do. I have something to ask of my father so I will go to speak with him. Wait here until I return."

Leaving a dumbfounded Alisa, Lilia returned to the mansion from the back entrance.

—Lilia. What are you trying pull here?

—Pull what? I'm properly following your directions.

—Muu... Well, I suppose how you accomplish my instructions, is for you to decide...

Lilia was walking down the hallway heading towards her father. If it's now, he should be working in his office going through documents. It had become his routine to confirm all the paperwork for the day before breakfast time. Knocking on the door of the second floor office, sure enough her father's voice came in response.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Father."

"Lilia...? So you've come out of your room, huh. Enter."

Though the words were blunt, he was wrapped in a happy atmosphere. For her normally unemotive father, Lilia was considerably surprised at his current disposition. And so she reflected on her actions a little. To think that he had been this worried.

Lilia entered the office. At the very back of the room sat her father at his desk. Though the eyes that stared straight at her father shone in a cold light, the side of her face moved ever so slightly. As if she was suppressing a smile.

“Good morning, Father.”

“Ahh, morning. So, what do you need?”

Overtuning the happy mood from before, the talk proceeded quickly. Lilia who was aware that her father was a busy person even amongst the nobles, quickly cut to the chase.

“It seems that Father had bestowed the flowerbeds here to the maids.”

“Ahh. I thought that it would be a good past-time for them. What about it?”

“I one request regarding that. I would like to receive the flowerbed allocated to Alisa.”

Her father’s face fell in disappointment. With a shake of his head, he gazed at Lilia through squinted eyes. With just that the temperature in the room plummeted all at once.

“Lilia. So you’re still saying such things, huh...”

It was her father’s way of ascertaining her own actions. With admiration towards her reliable father, Lilia responded.

“Do you happen to have any seeds you would recommend? If you have any suggestions I’d very much like to receive them.”

Without a word, her father silently got up, and went to a shelf at the corner of the wall. Opening the shelf, from inside it he produced a small paper bag. She wondered why in the world he had flower seeds kept in such a place, but those thoughts were dispelled as her father approached with the bag in hand.

Her father presented the paper bag, and Lilia respectfully received it.

“Lilia. If you overdo it too much, even I won’t be able to protect you anymore.”

“My, what a strange thing to say. I’m not doing anything to be ashamed of right now you know?”

Heaving a large sigh, her father gave a short “you may go”, and returned to the back of the room. Lilia gave a deep bow on the spot, as she took her leave and exited from the room.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 4

Returning to the flowerbed, it seemed that Alisa was obediently waiting there as commanded. Confirming Lilia's return, for some reason the maid let out a sigh of relief.

"I've spoken with Father. He allowed me to grow flowers here."

At Lilia's abrupt declaration, Alisa gave a bow in agreement.

"This flowerbed belongs to Mistress. So..."

"For now, Alisa, bring me tools. Immediately."

"Eh, ah... Yes. Certainly."

Though she was looking somewhat dissatisfied, Alisa still ran off to retrieve the tools. Looking on as her maid departed, Lilia simply stood there waiting. Sakura made a sound in protest as if she had something to say, but it was ignored.

Alisa returned shortly, and in her hands she carried a basket filled with a small spade and other various gardening instruments.

"Thank you for waiting."

"Yes. Well then Alisa."

Under Lilia's intense gaze, Alisa held a panicked expression, unsure if she had done something to displease her master. Probably completely unaware of Alisa's inner thoughts, Lilia continued.

"From today on this flowerbed belongs to me right?"

"Yes... That is so."

"However, I have absolutely no idea about how flowers are raised."

Towards Alisa with her head tilted in confusion, Lilia presented the paper bag containing the seeds. As she received it, Alisa's bewilderment only deepened.

"You, will raise them."

"Eh."

"Of course since this is my flowerbed, I will be helping. That's why I've come this far together with you. I'll be giving you my assistance, so you'd better make these flowers bloom beautifully when the time comes."

Finally seeming to understand her intentions, Alisa's eyes widened. The muffled snickering coming from Sakura was a little bit unpleasant, but Lilia still had one thing she wanted to say.

"You are my personal maid. It is my wish to see these flowers bloom brilliantly. You can make that happen, yes?"

Alisa nodded repeatedly, and gave a vigorous bow.

"Yes! Thank you very much, Mistress!"

While feeling a little thrill from giving commands as a superior, Lilia immediately began her instructions. Bringing out the spade from the tools Alisa brought,

“Well then let’s get planting. Will you teach me how to do this, Alisa?”

“Yes! Of course!”

Lilia had to narrow her eyes a little at the overwhelming brilliance of Alisa’s beaming face.

Finishing her gardening with Alisa, Lilia once again went for a bath. Having ordered Alisa to bring her a fresh change of clothes, Lilia headed towards the baths.

—Well ain’t you just a blushing schoolgirl?

On the way, Sakura’s cheerful teasing voice came out. At being ignored, Sakura simply continued.

—You did things in such a way to raise the plants together while maintaining your pride as the master, but Alisa probably already has you figured out you know?

—Oh shut up. I followed what you said so you should have no complaints right?

—Why of course. You did very well.

—Your tone just always has to be so irritating, huh...

Lilia was well aware by now that trying to retort any more than this would simply be foolish endeavor, so she stepped into the bathroom without another word.

Finished with the bath, Lilia changed into the dress Alisa had prepared for her and headed to the dining room. With the time spent working in the dirt, it was almost time for breakfast.

—I wonder what’s on the menu today~. I’m looking forward to it.

—It’s not like you’re the one that’s going to be eating here.

—Fufufu. Behold, one of my special angel powers! All of your sensations are shared with me!

Sakura boasted with an “Ahem!”. If she had a body she would certainly be puffing out her chest in pride. At being able to easily picture such a sight, Lilia couldn’t help but let out a smile.

—So, you’re not really an angel, are you?

—0F C0UR53, 13N’T 1T 0BV10U5. (monotone)

—Why are you talking like that...

While wondering what kind of existence Sakura could really be, Lilia opened the door to the dining room.

A large table stood at the center of the wide dining room. The rest of the family were already seated there. Lilia’s father Kelvin, her mother Ascha, her elder brother Klaus, and younger brother Theo made up the four currently sitting at the table. Together with Lilia, these five were the Aldis Duke family that resided in this estate.

With Lilia arriving at the table, the servants brought in the food for breakfast. With the center of the table lined with fresh bread, bowls filled with soup were placed in front of the diners. A jam-like

substance made from mashed fruits was also brought out.

Though it was quite a simple breakfast for this Duke clan who's power was second only to the royal family, this was normal at this mansion. Alisa's mother preferred to have modest meals, so big feasts that couldn't be finished in one sitting were foreign to this house. This was one of the things Lilia was dissatisfied about.

—How embarrassing it is to have your meals be inferior even to the barons of this country.

—Well, hey. It's delicious so isn't this fine. The taste here is better than what you'd get at the occasional banquet you went to right?

Lilia shook her head, unable to comprehend Sakura's point of view.

With everyone now gathered, they began to give their prayer. To the god of this world.

No one spoke during the meal. The silence stretched on as they ate. According to her mother, this was the best way to show appreciation towards the people who made them the meal. In the end, the reasoning behind this was incomprehensible to Lilia as well.

—So the one behind all the un-duke-like things here was Ms. Ascha. Isn't that great.

—I can't understand it at all. To not use the privilege bestowed upon you.

—Ahaha. Lilia sure is a natural born aristocrat.

Though Lilia felt like making a comeback, it would just be wasted effort, or rather pointless emotional exertion against Sakura. Without minding it she made to finish her meal.

—Yep. It was quite delicious after all. This jam was especially nice, wasn't it.

—Are my senses really shared with you right now? By the way, what kind of things do you hate?

She had thought it was just another joke, but their senses really did seem to be connected from the delighted tone of Sakura's voice. While being a bit surprised at this, Lilia showed a mischievous expression.

—Green peppers. No way to that bitterness!

—Very nice. I'll remember that well.

—Wait wait what are you gonna do no way hold up really the thing I hate is that jam you know!

After that point Sakura kept on insisting about her "real" hated food, but it was all ignored. With the silence around the time that the meal was finished, Lilia tilted her head slightly, pondering her next move.

—I'm sorry... If anything, please just stay away from raw green peppers... I'll deal with anything else...

It was an absolutely tearful voice. Hearing it Lilia reflexively spat out the water she was drinking. Astonishing her surroundings, the servants hastily rushed over, but Lilia's mind was completely preoccupied with something else.

—It's just a joke, I'm not going to do such weird things alright!

—Really?

—Really, really, I promise.

—Lilia... Thank you so much!

This time it had completely flipped over to a voice so happy it was dancing for joy. Though it almost felt mad with enthusiasm, it didn't have that much of a bad connotation to it.

With the dirtied table quickly cleaned up by the servants, Lilia's father slowly opened his mouth to speak.

"Lilia. About what we talked about this morning..."

Wondering what it could be about, Lilia turned to face her father. Since she had done nothing wrong, looking closely at her father's face he seemed to be returning an awkward gaze towards her.

"I heard the story from Alisa."

"Is that so. Are there any problems?"

While Sakura deemed that there should be no problems here, her father's judgement might differ. She nervously waited for her father to continue.

"No, no problems. It seems that you will be raising those flowers together with Alisa from now on huh."

"Yes. Ah, that's right, Father. I would like to personally have Alisa as my maid, would that acceptable?"

Confusion appeared in her father's eyes. Though, as he straightened his neck, it had already disappeared. In its place her father had a wry smile.

"Though in the first place, Alisa was supposed to be the personal maid assigned to you..."

"Huh? My apologies, Father. I didn't seem to quite catch your words..."

It was only with these words that her father spoke in a small voice. It wasn't heard clearly the first time, but, well her father simply shook his head this time.

"Don't worry about it. Regarding Alisa, there's no problem. You can take her as your personal maid."

"Really? Thank you very much, Father."

—Lilia! Smile time!

At Sakura's sudden exclamation, Lilia's expression reflexively turned into a dubious frown. It wasn't as if anything really good happened, so it seemed out of the ordinary to smile here. Even so, at Sakura's urging, she would just follow along for now.

Thanks you very much, Father.

Expressing her thanks once again, she showed a smile. She had been trained on how to smile from a young age so there were no problems. However, Her father's wry smile only got deeper.

“There’s no need to for a smile. Don’t worry about it.”

—Wait a sec... Was it a failure?

—Ehh??

It seems that Sakura wasn’t omnipotent after all. It seems like her own judgement was also required, Lilia thought as Sakura’s evaluation was lowered just a little. She quickly returned her sight to here father as he cleared his throat.

“Back to the topic but, I heard you’re going to raise the flowers with Alisa. To be honest, since you’ve only ever thought about yourself I was quite surprised.”

“My, that’s horrible Father. I am always concerned about my surroundings though?”

As her father’s face twitched ever so slightly, her mother and elder brother let out small sighs. Only her little brother had a blank expression as he gazed at everyone else’s reactions.

“Well, yep. Alright. Lilia. Do take care of the people around you.”

At her father’s conclusion, taking his leave, he departed from the dining room. Her mother followed, and her two brothers also left the room in a hurry. Alone in the dining room, Lilia was simply left there, with her head dubiously tilted to one side.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 5

After breakfast, when Lilia went towards her quarters, Alisa was standing before her room. Before Lilia knew it Alisa was already in a respectful bow. Disregarding it she went past Alisa and entered.

“Mistress, what shall we do about school?”

With a start, Lilia stopped her movement.

In this country there existed the Upper Academy and the Lower Academy, with the upper level school being for nobles and famous merchants to attend. On top of, obviously, learning to read and write, the lessons there consisted of such things as history and math, with even simple magics being included in the curriculum. It was a place for nurturing the talents of society’s elites. On the other hand, the lower level school simply taught the bare minimum of reading and writing skills, and anyone could enroll here simply by paying a small tuition fee.

The one Lilia attended was of course the Upper Academy. Enrolling in the same school as the prince, she had competed consistently in the top rankings with her superior grades. However, currently the prospect of returning to classes was not appealing in the least.

“Not going.”

At Lilia’s words, Alisa suppressed a sigh.

“That won’t do, Mistress. You’ve already been away for a whole week. The master has yet to say anything but, at this rate...”

“At this rate, what?”

Narrowing her eyes, she turned to face Alisa. Looking about to cry, Alisa lowered her eyes to the ground. Lilia gave a small sigh and continued further into her room. Sitting down in an expensive looking chair, she tapped lightly on the table before her with a fingertip.

“Yes... I understand.”

Recognising her master’s intention from that action alone, Alisa gave a small bow and left from the room. Lilia let out a breath of relief, and sank deep into the chair.

—Lilia. You can’t just not return to school you know.

—I know, I know....

She knew that she couldn’t keep going like this. But, if she went back to the school, there would be no avoiding all the faces she didn’t want to see, and the prince would definitely be looking towards her with scorn. If nothing else, *that* would not be able to endure.

—Sakura. With your instructions, would I be able to win back the prince?

—Sorry. I can’t say for sure, but it’d probably be impossible.

Though the answer was to be expected, actually hearing it Lilia couldn’t help but feel down. Even though up until now the prince would show her his smiling face when they met, from now on that would certainly be impossible. Just thinking about such a thing, tears naturally spilled from Lilia’s eyes.

—Lilia. It's not like I don't get your feelings but.

—What now...

—It's your just desserts. The consequences to your actions. It's nothing more, nothing less than that yeah?

Lilia's eyes shot open, a flickering anger burned in her pupils. She opened her mouth, about to yell out.

—It was the way you handled it that was wrong.

The words made Lilia come to a halt.

—It was a fact that you were engaged. Even if he's a prince, he couldn't erase that fact, or easily cancel your engagement. Even if it was infuriating, you should have just watched over him, and treated it as a temporary infatuation on his part.

—Isn't it obvious... That I'd never be able to do such a thing...

—That's right isn't it. Besides, such things are already done and in the past.

At Sakura's reasoning, Lilia reflexively knit her eyebrows. Certainly, nothing can be done now about the things that happened. But she didn't have to put it like that.

—Right now, you can only do your best in your current reality.

She already knew that. Lilia also accepted the fact that she couldn't continue her break from school. It's just that, no matter what she didn't want to meet that girl and the prince.

—That's why, Lilia. You just have to make that prince regret his decision in not choosing you right?

—Something like that... How in the world, am I supposed to do that...?

Getting back at him didn't seem like a bad idea. Against an untouchable existence like the prince, making him regret his own actions was the next best thing. The problem was that Lilia couldn't think of any way to actually accomplish this.

Sakura however smiled, as if saying it was quite simple.

—You can do it as long as have the know-how. Become familiar with everyone, a person recognised by all, respected by all. Show kindness towards various people, while staying unrelenting at times to prove your reliability. I won't tell you to garner the admiration of ten thousand fans, but you must be able to win the support of the majority of people.

—Sounds like an empty dream to me...

—That may be so. But, there's nothing to lose from aiming for this goal, right?

Everything Sakura had said only amounted to an ideal, a dream. No matter how much one strives in their pursuit of knowledge, they still couldn't hope to succeed over someone who had studied to become an expert. But even so, it was probably better to struggle than simply rotting away in defeat. Alone, such a thing was probably impossible to accomplish for Lilia, but for better or for worse right now she had this meddlesome being beside her.

—Since you're saying all this, I take it that you will be lending me your strength, yes?

To Lilia's question, Sakura gave her cheerful response.

—Why but of course. 'Cause I'm an angel after all! I'll be your guiding sage!

—Angel? Isn't this just the delusion of an evil spirit?

—Meanie!

An indignant complaint came aimed at her, but Lilia ignored it. At being disregarded, Sakura suddenly fell silent, then spoke in a tiny voice.

—Fine then fine then. I'm just an evil spirit. Hmph...

At the voice growing so timid, Lilia couldn't help but let out a laugh. If she were to apologise, Sakura would probably immediately cheer up, laughing. Though she thought about what a simple person that girl was, Lilia didn't put that into words. After all, chatting with Sakura did cheer her up a little. That was why,

—Though it really isn't too far off the mark huh.

Lilia pretended to not hear this muttering that came from Sakura.

"Alisa. Could I trouble you to have something easy to eat delivered to my room for lunch? Also, could you bring me something to write with right now. Ahh, school? I'll go starting next week."

Alisa was somewhat perplexed at Lilia's instructions, but she immediately moved to carry them out. Passing on Lilia's request to the cook, just to be safe she also went to report to Kelvin, the Master of the estate. Thus borrowing from him some paper and a pen, she returned to Lilia's room.

"Did you report to Father?"

"Should I not have?"

"No such thing. In fact it was something I should have included in my instructions."

Lilia was thankful that Alisa had accomplished the things she deemed necessary even without being ordered to.

Though eventually she might act outside of Lilia's intentions, for now there was nothing to be worried about. Receiving the pen and paper from Alisa, Lilia saw her off before sitting down in a chair. Spreading the paper on the table, it was a slightly large piece of white parchment.

—That some nice paper. It's amazing how you can easily obtain such a thing here.

"Indeed. This is the materialisation of Mother's efforts. The magic to make paper was developed by Mother after all."

As long as you had the materials, with just the chant and the magic formation you could mass produce this paper. This was the magic that Lilia's mother, Ascha had pioneered, which completely had overturned paper's status as a super valuable commodity just years prior. Thanks to her mother, even commoners could easily obtain and make use of paper these days.

Although it wasn't a good thing for everyone; there was the problem of rendering the jobs of most people who were in the paper making industry obsolete, at this point things have generally calmed down regarding that.

“And so? What should I be doing?”

—Right. I will teach you the way, Lilia. I have no idea about things like etiquette or magic, but I am confident that my wealth of knowledge won't lose to anyone else in this world.

It was certainly big talk. She could not completely believe in such grand words but, even so Sakura seemed more capable than Lilia herself.

“Well then, I'll look forward to it.”

At receiving a suitable response, Sakura enthusiastically declared to 'leave it to me'.

Though, they'll soon find out that Sakura's words might not necessarily prove to be as flawless as they seem.

For one week, Lilia again remained shut in her room. Just, this time it couldn't truly be called that, as she never failed to show up in the dining room for meals. Every time she appeared she would receive worry from her parents, and scornful eyes from her elder brother, but ignoring it all Lilia remained completely focused on tackling her studies with Sakura.

Eating. Sleeping. Learning. Every day would roughly consist of a constant cycle of these things. The only exception was in her morning routine.

“It still hasn't sprouted?”

“It's just been planted after all.”

At the back of the estate, there was the flowerbed that Lilia and Alisa were taking care of together. Simply watering the soil, Lilia always gazed at the flowerbed without ever getting tired of it. Perhaps thinking such a thing was quite unusual, Alisa would be smiling beside her.

“Miss Lilia. You know, even if you stare at it so much it's not going to grow any faster.”

Without realising when it began, Alisa had started to call Lilia using her name. Since there weren't any bad intentions behind it, things simply continued like that.

“I know that of course. Don't worry about it.”

“Fufu...”

Though Alisa watched on with a pleasant smile, the reality was a little different from her thinking. Lilia was doing it simply to lengthen this break of hers, as much as possible. At the very least, she would continue until Sakura said something about it...

—Lilia. It's about time to get back to studying. We still have a long ways ahead of us you know.

As she expected, Sakura urged her to continue with her studies. Lilia let loose a small sigh, and sluggishly lifted herself up.

“Miss Lilia. You will be studying today as well?”

“Yes. There are still many things I must be taught after all.”

“To be taught...?”

Alisa frowned in doubt at such words, while Lilia hastily cleared her throat. Shaking her head, as if to say she was just talking to herself, Lilia hurriedly escaped back towards her room.

“Bring me something to eat that’s easy to hold later on.”

At the request sent towards Alisa right before disappearing into the mansion, the maid conveyed that she understood, seeing her master off with a bow.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 6

Such a lifestyle continued throughout the week. Lilia learned many things from Sakura. Naturally, not everything could be learned in just the span of a week. It was just that, staying absent from school for any longer would be bad. From now on, she would plan to continue her studies in the few moments she can spare in the morning and night before turning in.

Lilia got dressed in her school uniform for the first time in a while. It was a sailor uniform based in white.

—I’ve been wondering since before, but since when have these uniforms existed from?

“According to the history, these uniforms have been the tradition here for over a hundred years.”

—Hmmm... So that means there has probably been people other than me before huh...

Lilia frowned at Sakura’s words. She seemed to be implying that there have been existences similar to Sakura that have appeared in the past. In fact, it was impossible to completely deny that such beings have existed in the past before.

After all, Lilia couldn’t even confirm Sakura’s own existence.

After getting changed, Lilia headed off towards the dining room for breakfast.

In the dining room, the rest of the family had already gathered. They turned their gazes to Lilia as she entered, and seeing her in her uniform, their eyes widened in surprise. Feeling ever so slightly pleased at garnering such a reaction, Lilia took her seat at the table.

“Lilia. You’re going to school?”

The one who asked was her father. Lilia answered with a nod.

“Yes. I’ll be heading to the dorms today. I apologise for the worry I’ve caused.”

As Lilia said so lowering her head, her father’s mouth fell open, completely stupefied. While she was questioning in her mind if such a thing was really that unthinkably surprising, she noticed Sakura snickering away and her head flared up a little.

“But being so sudden the preparations for a coach to get there is...”

“Please rest assured. It would not do for me to trouble Father for such things, so I have already had them prepared. Though the ones who actually carried everything out were Alisa and the servants...”

“I–is that so... But at least giving a report would be... No, I suppose that’s fine but...”

Her father’s shoulders fell. All of his normal air of authority leaving his figure. While thinking what a strange sight it was, the food was laid out on the table and she didn’t give it any further thought.

“Well then, let’s dig in. Before that... Klaus! Put away those papers already!”

At her father’s exclamation, Klaus only gave a small shrug. Beside Lilia, though there was actually quite a distance between them, looking at her elder brother – he had been intently reading through some sort of documents the whole time.

“Klaus!”

Lilia's father shouted angrily once again. Her brother only gave a slight glance, and with a small click of his tongue put away his papers. Thinking her father would show some reaction to the rude tongue click, it seems that it did not actually reach his ears. As if it had nothing to do with her, Lilia thought about how noisy these people were right from the morning.

"Well then... Let's eat."

Completing their before meal prayer, Lilia reached out and took a piece of the bread laid before her.

During breakfast, Sakura was in a great mood. Now that she knew that Lilia was the type to listen, she was humming all the time. It wasn't as if the humming was completely tone deaf and grinding on the ears, so Lilia didn't pay much attention to that part. But she was questioning why Sakura was so happy.

—Tasty food.

It was a short but easy to understand answer. With their senses shared, it seems that whenever Lilia ate delicious tasting food Sakura would also feel great and become happy.

Thinking those carefree thoughts, it suddenly happened.

"Klaus! That's enough!"

Once again Lilia's father shouted angrily. Thinking that they were such noisy people, she turned to look towards her elder brother. He once again had those documents in his hands, with wrinkles between his eyebrows.

"How many times do I have to tell you to at least stop working during mealtimes!"

"I must say, Father. These are things I must urgently take care of. If what these documents show is true, that person is improperly using our family's finances. Shouldn't the meal wait until after such a thing."

"But it should not become a problem during just one mealtime."

"That is naive, Father. Regarding improper actions, we should take care of such matters with haste."

It was about making an example out of it as a warning to others.

At her brother's concluding words, her father made a grimace. It seems that the father and son had different ways of thinking.

—Well it has nothing to do with me after all.

—Lilia. You won't stop them?

—Oh my. Should I be? If you say so, Sakura, I'll give it a try.

Even though she asked so, Sakura's answer was obvious. If Sakura judged that she should stop them here, Lilia would have received such instructions before she had to ask to confirm for herself.

—I won't say that. Even if you did speak up, they would probably just tell you that women should stay out of it or something.

—That's right huh. It's easy to imagine what would happen.

—Yep. We'll just continue our preparations for school. And after that's finished we'll study as much as we can.

—Yeah yeah.

Lilia glanced at her father and brother, before changing her gaze to her mother. Noticing Lilia's gaze, her mother gave a wry smile as she understood Lilia's intention and nodded. Giving a light bow towards her mother, Lilia got up from her seat. The duo engaged in their oral combat remained oblivious.

“Elder Sister. I will go as well.”

Her younger brother Theo timidly held on to Lilia's sleeve. As she frowned ever so slightly, with a warning from Sakura, Lilia hurriedly plastered a smile on her face. Even she herself believed that her artificial smile had improved over this one week.

“Alright then. Shall we head off?”

“Yes.”

Theo also left his seat, and on their way to the door the documents on the table came into view.

—Gosh... Aren't the problems here on a different level than what they're arguing about.

Expenses, and their sources, were the things written on the documents. The entries had bad spacing and were hard to distinguish, rendering the contents to be quite complicated to look at. It was like the thing was just asking for miscalculations to happen.

In fact, the one who made this document and her brother who confirmed it were both mistaken and at fault here.

Since it couldn't be helped, Lilia let out a small sigh, and opened her mouth to speak.

“Elder Brother.” *TLN: Actually “Onii-sama”, but my style's already set :(

“What is it. Women should stay out of this alright.”

At the abrupt disregarding attitude Lilia reflexively knit her eyebrows. Her father also looked like he was uncomfortable with her brother's words, so before he could raise an objection and she gets caught up in the argument as well she quickly gave an evasive response.

“As I am a busy person myself, I'll just say one thing. Here, here, and here. The calculations are wrong.”

“What are you talking about-...”

Her brother looked down at the documents. After falling silent for a while, his eyes went wide with shock.

“Well then, I will be taking my leave.”

Saying so Lilia lowered her head, and headed for the dining room door. Having no more interest in something like her father and brother's quarrel, she took Theo along and just like that exited the room.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 7

“It seems that it was our misunderstanding huh.”

Kelvin sighed and fixed his posture. Klaus still had a difficult expression on his face as he glared at the documents.

“What, is there something else?”

To Kelvin’s question, Klaus present the papers to him.

“Father. Are you able to calculate these on the spot?”

Giving just one look at the documents he received, Kelvin shook his head.

“Impossible. It’ll probably take some time, and doing it in your head would be difficult as well.”

“Then regarding Lilia?”

“.....”

Kelvin again lowered his sight to the documents. He tried to roughly do some calculations, but using only mental arithmetic turned out to be quite undoable in the end.

“I heard from the report of that Alisa girl that Lilia has been secluding herself in her room to study but... Is this result even possible to achieve?”

What’s more it was self-study. According to Alisa, it seemed that she was using a huge quantity of paper to write on, but other than the maid no one else appeared to have ever entered Lilia’s room.

“As one would expect from our daughter. Is this not a wonderful thing?”

Ascha laughed happily. Certainly if their daughter was heading in a bad direction they must do their best to set her straight, but change for the better should be welcomed.

“Though it seems that she might be trying too hard here.”

Kelvin also shared Ascha’s worry. However you put it, she had secluded herself in her room for two whole weeks after all. She might have shown improvement during the second week through doing things like raising flowers and coming out for meals, but even so some worry remained.

“Klaus. Is there someone available right now?”

“Yes, of course. It has already been arranged for.”

To Kelvin’s question, Klaus boasted with an unsettling smile. Confirming, a smile also floated onto Kelvin’s face. The secretive smiles plastered on their faces were indeed somewhat creepy. One wouldn’t be able to imagine that they were fighting just earlier.

“She’s my dear beloved daughter after all. I leave it to you, Klaus.”

“She’s my lovely little sister after all. Please leave everything to me, Father.”

Despite saying this or that, these two really care about Lilia.

Ascha, regarding their awkwardness, simply quietly asked to the side for a maid to bring more red tea.

Lilia requested for Alisa to have the luggage in her room loaded onto the coach, while she herself went for a walk in the garden with Theo. She didn't remember ever having much proper conversations with this little brother of hers before. This was because, Lilia herself had always kept a distance from him. After all this little brother could do anything. A bona fide genius. Therefore the reason for staying away from such a brother, was simple jealousy. But even so for some reason, this little brother would always seek out Lilia himself and speak to her with a smile as if somehow enjoying it all. It was troublesome to no end.

Today as well, Theo was walking along beside Lilia with a delighted smile.

"Elder Sister. Which one is your flowerbed? I really wish to see it."

"Why are you wanting to see such a thing? Though, I don't really mind."

While thinking it odd, Lilia showed Theo to the back of the estate.

Among the many flowerbeds, was one with plants just starting to sprout. This was Lilia and Alisa's flowerbed. Though she had just a tiny suspicion that he may have come to mock it, the words Theo breathed out next were completely outside of her expectations.

"What will become of this while Elder Sister is staying at school?"

"No idea... I haven't thought about that yet. Alisa will be coming along with me after all."

"Then, please let me help with this!"

Lilia's eyes went round at Theo's request. "Why" was the first question to pop into her mind. Certainly if it's Theo, he would be able to quickly learn all he needed to know about gardening, so it should be fine to leave it to him. However, Lilia couldn't fathom if his intentions were all pure.

"Even if it's not mine, you can probably have your own flowerbed prepared just by speaking to Father though."

"I wish to take care of Elder Sister's flowerbed!"

It was too much for her to comprehend. So much so, her eyes ended up changing to stare at Theo as if he was a strange animal. Receiving such a look from Lilia, Theo lowered his gaze. And then came back with upturned eyes as he pleaded.

"Is it...no good?"

While thinking it completely unfair to wield such a tear filled expression, Lilia kept this thought from her mouth.

—You might as well just leave it to him.

—Well I suppose that's fine but... Do you know what Theo's trying to accomplish here?

—Rather than a goal I do know his reason. You don't get it, Lilia?

Why was it, that even though Sakura's figure couldn't be seen, a young girl's mocking expression floated into her head. While holding onto some irritation, Lilia felt that continuing to respond to this will just end up in her defeat, so she discontinued the conversation there.

“Alright, I understand. I’ll leave it to you, Theo.”

“...!! Yes! Thank you very much!”

Theo said so with a smile radiant like flowers in full bloom. Even relatives would see it as exceedingly charming. Just how many women would be taken captive by this smile.

—Lilia. You should go teach Theo on how to do gardening.

—Even without my help, wouldn’t he just learn from one of the maids.

—Just do it okay.

With how Sakura was insisting, perhaps this was also a step in getting people to like her.

“Theo. Well then I’ll be teaching you how to do it, so you’d better listen up.”

“Yes! Please by all means!”

Theo stood straight up. Lilia gave a nod of satisfaction, and continued.

“First for planting the seeds, you dig up the dirt put the seed in and then cover it up again. That’s it.”

—I think you’re being a little too careless about this!

Sakura shouted as if sighing, and,

“Mistress Lilia...”

Not realising when she appeared, a little bit away stood Alisa who spoke out at the same time with her eyebrows hanging in sadness.

“..... I was joking.”

With Theo’s bewildered eyes and Alisa’s pitying gaze, Lilia looked away as if escaping from their sights.

After that, together with Alisa, Lilia taught Theo in the ways of gardening. That said, Lilia’s knowledge was somewhat limited, so the teaching was mostly through Alisa’s assistance here. Even so Theo was for some reason very fixated on the teachings he received from Lilia, while giving little heed to the things Alisa said to supplement Lilia’s explanations.

Even now she did not really get what kind of situation that was.

Jostled around on the coach headed for the academy, Lilia thought back to what happened that time.

Having given up on thinking about it she tried to get an answer from Sakura, but was only met with a cold refusal.

—You should really try to better understand other people’s feelings, Lilia. How about you give it a good thinkin’ until we reach the academy?

Schizophrenia – Chapter 8

Even though Sakura said so, no matter how much Lilia tried to think about it understanding just wouldn't come to her. She felt that just thinking about it was probably useless.

"Hey, Alisa."

When Lilia called out to Alisa sitting opposite to her, a reply of "yes" came immediately.

"I can't quite seem to figure out what Theo's intentions were back there. Do you get it, Alisa?"

"That's... I somewhat understand, but I can't be sure that I'm correct."

"Is that so..."

Alisa knew. Therefore recalling all the things that have happened up to now, Lilia should also be able to reach somewhat of an answer. The events of today, and at that just thinking back to the encounter with Theo, the conclusion she reached was,

"He wanted to get along better with me...?"

After muttering such, Lilia immediately said in self derision.

"As if, like that could be the case. There should be a limit to being self conscious."

Hearing that, Sakura gave a small sigh, and Alisa lowered her eyebrows sadly, but Lilia noticed neither of them.

The distance from the Aldis duke estate to the academy could be traversed in around three hours by coach. With that in mind even if one left the estate in the afternoon they could arrive on the same day with time to spare. However, for today Alisa wanted to rest easy in the dormitory, and departed from the estate before noon to avoid having to run into anyone. After classes ended people would be returning to the dorm in the evening, so if she entered her room now there should be no one there to question her.

The prince's declaration of the break-off to their engagement should already be well known by now. Just imagining the gazes from her surroundings brought her dread. That said, it would be impossible to attend school without running into anyone. Today would be the only exception.

—Nothing will change even if you run away right?

—Oh shut up...

Lilia too understood that much. That's why, it was just for today. Diving into the atmosphere at school, she would use tonight to properly harden her resolve. She knew that it was just an excuse to herself. Even so, to Lilia this was the only choice she could take.

A little past noon, the academy's structure came into view.

The academy's grounds were quite large. Along with the enormous school building for education, training and various other sporting facilities also existed. For times of rain, there were even indoor athletic buildings on campus. What's more, though placed at a corner of the academy, there stood the dormitories boasting a size even greater than the main school building itself.

"Mistress Lilia. I..."

With one look at the academy Alisa turned around to face her master. Before she could continue her words, Lilia, anticipating her question answered preemptively.

“You will be in the same room as me.”

“Eh...”

“My, is there a problem?”

As Lilia narrowed her eyes and questioned the maid, Alisa flusteredly shook her head. Lilia accepted the response, and looked away.

—To be stuck with noisy Miss Selfish from dawn till dusk, how pitiful.

—And who might that be.

—Really, I wonder?

It was a voice that seemed to carry with it a mean-spirited smirk. Lilia knit her eyebrows,

“After all I’m just so loud and selfish right?”

Lilia sulked as she said that. Sakura was laughing and said that it was a joke, and,

“Tha-that’s not what I thought at all!”

Alisa shouted simultaneously. Lilia stiffened in surprise. Even Sakura hadn’t expected Alisa to respond to Lilia’s quiet mutter, and was at a loss for words.

Alisa was gazing over with an earnest expression. Lilia thought for a moment, and nodded lightly.

—There’s no difference between talking to her now or tonight right?

—Yep, I’ll leave it to you.

Receiving Sakura’s acknowledgement, Lilia opened her mouth.

“Hey, Alisa. Is that really true?”

“Of course! That’s definitely not what I was thinking about the current Mistress Lilia!”

“Then, what about right now?”

“That’s... of course I don’t think that way.”

Though Lilia decided to overlook the slight pause in Alisa’s words, she did not feel particularly displeased about it. It was an expected response.

“Alisa. Our voices here will not be heard at the driver’s stand right?”

“Eh? Yes, it will not reach but...”

“Then let’s have a frank discussion.”

Lilia said as she fixed up her posture, and Alisa’s expression turned serious.

“You see, I’ve decided to change. For that purpose I’ve studied things I didn’t want to, and worked to fixed my quick temper. But, by myself there are limits to what can be accomplished, and the people around me would certainly be unable to understand me.”

That was to say she was only making use of Sakura’s words. Lilia herself, to this day, did not fully understand where all of her own faults were. Even so, in this one week, it was certain that she managed to somewhat change the people in her estate’s perception of her. That was why Lilia listened to Sakura. That was why she simply followed Sakura’s words.

“I, to change myself, want someone to assist me. Someone who knows well what I was like before, a person who can tell me ‘no’ when I need it.”

“Is that... What you wish of me?”

“That’s right. I wouldn’t be saying all this otherwise right?”

Alisa closed her eyes, and fell silent. Her expression remained serious. Lilia refrained from interrupting her thoughts, and waited silently for her answer. As they continued to simply leave their bodies to the jostling of the carriage, finally as the academy drew up close in front of them, Alisa opened her mouth.

“Mistress Lilia. Please tell me just one thing.”

“What?”

“Are you still aiming for His Highness?”

‘How blunt,’ thought Lilia as she smiled bitterly inside. With a level expression, she shook her head.

“I’m over it already.”

“Really?”

“Well I would be lying if I said that there were no lingering feelings at all though.”

With some self ridicule in her answer, Alisa finally showed a smile. With an ‘I understand’, she gave a nod,

“If you are fine with me, please allow me to provide assistance. I am Mistress Lilia’s personal maid after all.”

At Alisa’s response, Lilia also gave a satisfied nod. As Sakura said, there was a considerable difference between having or not having a helper at one’s side. It was a pillar of emotional support, and in a certain sense that was the most important part.

With an ‘I’m in your care’, Lilia returned her sight to look outside the coach. She did so, a little happy, though mostly out of embarrassment, but Alisa took no notice and continued to speak.

“Well then, as to my view of what sort of person Mistress Lilia has been up until now, should I give a description here?”

Schizophrenia – Chapter 9

“Yes... Please. You don’t have to hold back.”

“Well then,” said Alisa as she cleared her throat,

“To be frank, you were a very selfish person. Furthermore, with that short temper you were also quick to be violent. One could only be amazed at how unreasonable you could be. I also felt that doing whatever it took to get your hands on the things you wanted was horrible. If nothing else because you would use the Master’s own name without reservation. Honestly, it was to the point that I had regretted coming to work here in the first place.

...What’s the matter?”

Upon noticing Lilia’s expression turn pale Alisa inquired tilting her head slightly to one side. Lilia’s face was cramped as she shook her head.

“It’s nothing... Go on...”

Saying so Alisa continued her critical criticism combo. It went to the point where rather than anger Lilia felt more like she would simply start crying. She had received similar scoldings from Sakura before, but once again, and having it said straight to her face, it was certainly something hard to endure.

“However.”

Alisa paused her words there. Looking at Lilia’s lifeless eyes, for some reason Alisa smiled.

“I know that Mistress Lilia is really a kind person. This I believe.”

“Ha...?”

Kind. Who’s kind. Even Lilia herself was of a different opinion. To Lilia, something like kindness was only seen as a tool in getting people to lower their guard. Such thinking hasn’t changed even now, so if Alisa’s words were regarding the current Lilia, that was simply a result of following Sakura’s instructions.

Thinking it couldn’t be helped, she felt just a little despondent. However, Lilia tilted her head upon hearing Alisa’s next words.

“When I was little, I was saved by Mistress Lilia.”

When Alisa saw Lilia frown dubiously, she explained with a wry smile.

“When I was still very young, I went on a trip to the Royal Capital with my family, and it was then that I had gotten separated from my parents... Losing my way, before I realised I had happened upon a large estate.”

“Is that so... Which family’s estate was it.”

—Uh, Lilia, how could any name other than “Aldis” come up here...

—Really?

—Really. Please expect such things.

Though not quite satisfied with the explanation, Lilia continued to listen to Alisa's story.

"I don't know what was going through my mind back then, but I ended up entering that estate... And of course, I was immediately caught."

"That's... You weren't executed?"

—Uh, Lilia. Her being executed there would be ridiculous right?

—Really?

—Is the one in front of you right now a ghost or something? Is this nice story really a horror?

—Ahh...

Perhaps finally comprehending what Sakura was trying to say, Lilia went 'I see' and nodded in understanding. Sakura wondered if it was really okay and was worrying about something, but for now Lilia turned her attention towards Alisa.

"By all rights, even being a child it wouldn't have been strange for me to be killed there but, it was right then that I was saved by Mistress Lilia."

"I did? How?"

"Well you see... 'To be wary of such a child to the point of ending her life, are you trying to stain the Aldis name' was what you said."

—That's, less about kindness and more to do with your pride isn't it...

"After that, so that I wouldn't get killed in some alley Mistress Lilia accompanied me with an escort to help look for my family. And though I say escort, it was really the Master who came along as well."

Alisa narrowed her eyes as if recollecting some nostalgic memories, and then let out a giggle.

"The reaction my parents had back then was quite amusing."

—Lilia, you don't remember?

—I'm not quite sure if I have such memories or not... Though at least, I don't think my feelings back then were of pure good will.

—Well... Alisa probably knows that by now as well. That's why, earlier, I think she was trying to convey that she believes in you despite that. Besides.

Sakura stopped her words. It felt like she was somehow looking at Alisa. Alisa was gazing over with an earnest expression, seemingly waiting for Lilia to speak.

—To Alisa, the fact that she was saved won't change, so isn't it fine regardless. That way it's a convenient interpretation for everyone, right?

—Is that how it is?

"Alisa. To tell you the truth, I don't quite remember what happened back then. Just, I think that at least my feelings back then were not out of simple good will."

“Yes. I understand that now as well. However, to me the fact that I was saved will not change. That is why, if it is for my gratitude towards Mistress Lilia, I would happily give my humble assistance.”

Alisa confidently declared so. Lilia was dumbfounded for a while, but before long, without quite noticing it herself her expression turned into a smile.

“Take good care of me, Alisa.”

“Yes. Please allow me to be of assistance.”

Alisa bowed deeply, and Lilia nodded in satisfaction.

The dormitory was the largest building on the academy grounds. Since all the students in the school lived there, you could say it was a matter of course. The dormitory stood three stories tall, with the first housing things like the cafeteria and shops, with all the common necessities prepared. Upon entering the grand entrance hall, tables, chairs and such are prepared all around as well, creating an oasis for the students.

Lined up on the second level were the rooms for commoners, merchants, and lower ranking nobles, and the upper nobles had their rooms on the third floor.

Lilia and Alisa entered the dorms through the great entryway. There would be a mass of students bustling around the building before and after class time, but right now as lunch had just gone by and the afternoon classes had already begun it was quiet and empty. The entrance was devoid of people, and only the sound of Lilia and Alisa’s footsteps resounded through the building.

At the very back of the entrance hall was a spiral staircase, and as Lilia took her first step up Alisa opened her mouth.

“Ummm... Mistress Lilia...”

“What is it?”

“Am I really... also going to be in Mistress Lilia’s room?”

‘To ask again now,’ thought Lilia as she looked back at the maid. Alisa’s eyes were wavering uneasily.

“Is there a problem with that?”

“A problem so to speak... That is, such a thing is unheard of right? For a lowly maid to stay beside nobility in the same room...”

Schizophrenia – Chapter 10

“Isn’t it fine. If there has been no precedent, then we will create one.”

“That may be so, but what will the others have to say about this...”

Alisa’s continued misgivings caused irritation to slowly rise inside of Lilia. Where did that girl who just before unreservedly said everything on her mind go. Without trying to conceal her displeasure, Lilia spoke sharply.

“Alisa. Alisa Felis.”

“...! Yes.”

Alisa straightened up with a tense expression. This was to be expected, since to the nobles of this country, including the family name and addressing someone by their full name was that special. In most cases, an important order or a harsh reprimand would follow. Lilia fixed a sharp look at Alisa, and slowly opened her mouth.

“Are you, concerned about the glances from your surroundings?”

“That is... Yes...”

Though it seemed like she wanted to deny it, upon receiving Lilia’s gaze, Alisa nodded honestly. Lilia continued.

“Why?”

“Haa... Well... Even if you ask me that...”

“Alisa Felis.”

As Lilia called her name once again, Alisa trembled and sought to hide her face in escaping her master’s gaze. After a little while, she timidly took a peek at Lilia’s expression.

“Who is your master?”

“It is, Mistress Lilia.”

“I can’t hear you.”

“My master is Mistress Lilianne Aldis!”

Alisa straightened her back and declared with a shout. Lilia, Lilianne Aldis, nodded in satisfaction.

“Right. You are mine. My personal maid.”

“Yes.”

“As someone who serves me, what in the world are you afraid of?”

At that Lilia showed a smile.

The fearsome smile, that in this academy, brought terror to all.

“Stand proud. I am saying, that I would let none raise such an objection. Any scorn directed at you, I would certainly not forgive. If anything were to happen, speak out.”

Since they will all be crushed.

It was a low, spine-chilling voice. All the while with a smiling expression. Able to bring fear to all in this academy, there stood the figure of the duke’s daughter.

“Come now, let us go.”

Lilia went up the stairs. This time Alisa as well, now silenced, followed suit.

—Lilia’s so fearsome! So cool! I fell for you all over again!

—My. That much should be natural.

—As expected of Miss Duke’s Daughter! By the way, Lilia.

Sakura put on a formal sounding tone. Lilia frowned as she climbed the staircase.

—Lilia, was actually Lillianne huh.

“That’s what’s on your mind!?”

Lilia accidentally raised her voice, and since it sounded like a shout, Alisa jumped up in shock.

“Wa-, Wah...!”

As Alisa was about to fall, Lilia grabbed her hand, pulling and supporting her body.

“Th-thank you very much Mistress Lilia...”

But Alisa was ignored. She was too preoccupied for that.

—Hey Sakura, are you kidding me? You, didn’t even know my full name?

—I had thought it was just Lilia Aldis.

—What, you...! Nh...!

Seeing the frightened Alisa before her, Lilia’s face turned into a cramped smile. Quickly averting her eyes, she climbed the stairs at a slightly heightened pace.

—Sakura. Is it really alright for me to put my faith in you?

—Of, of course you can? I’m your dear angel descended to help you!

—And yet you didn’t even know my name, it seems.

—Auu... But, it wasn’t written in the book I had after all...

Lilia frowned at Sakura’s words. If Lilia were to believe what she said, it would mean that Sakura possessed a book that had things concerning Lilia written in it. Being of Lilia’s status, that in itself would make her well known to some degree, but that was just between nobles. At the very least it wasn’t to the point where she would be mentioned in some sort of book.

—And just what book is that?

Lilia questioned. Though she already knew the answer. In these sort of situations, Sakura's response would be as such without fail.

—Ahh...Just talking to myself.

She would never talk about anything concerning herself. Whether she thought it was something pointless to talk about, or if there were things that couldn't be said, Lilia had no idea. If only she knew even a little about Sakura, she could begin learning more about her.

With those thoughts in mind, Lilia smiled in self-derision. She had thought about this countless times when Sakura was teaching her, and she would always reach the same conclusion. What would she even do, finding out? And so, just as she was casting away these questions without answers, they arrived on the third floor.

Similarly, from before they came up the staircase, an entryway just like the one on the first floor greeted them. As a matter of course this floor was also lined with tables and chairs, but what stood out here from the other floors, was that at first glance one could tell that everything consisted of high-class goods. Naturally, if one were to compare it to the things in the Aldis estate they would be of lower class though.

From this room stretched countless corridors, each leading to their respective residences. Just as Lilia was about to head down the corridor leading to her own room,

“Ah... Miss Lillianne.”

At the sound of that voice, Lilia's eyes opened wide, and she was stopped in her tracks. Like she had still not completed some sort of preparation or other, upon hearing that voice, Lilia's head turned completely blank.

“Who might this be?”

The voice came from immediately behind Lilia. Alisa was questioning the owner of the voice.

“Ah, that is... I am Tina Breyer.”

“Breyer? Of that Baron house?”

“Ye, yes.”

Tina's voice seemed to tremble slightly. It wasn't too surprising since up until now she had been the target of Lilia's grief. Since that was the case however, why was it that she was going out of her way to call out to Lilia? Holding fear towards her, it should have been fine to avoid greeting Lilia. Lilia herself certainly did not want to run into her right now.

However, now that she had been called out to, she couldn't just ignore it. If she were to say there was no problem with it, there wouldn't really be much issue with that, but having it seem like she was the one running away from the situation was not something Lilia's pride would allow. Lilia breathed a small sigh and then turned to face the girl.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 11

Along with Alisa, the figure of one more person entered her view. It was a girl with long, pale golden hair and light blue eyes. One of the people Lilia still did not wish to meet, the one who snatched the prince away from Lilia, what appeared was the figure of Tina Breyer.

Alisa's interrogation continued.

"And just what business does this baron's daughter have with her Mistress Lilianne? I believe you should be aware of the Aldis duke family?"

"Of course. Well, I am..."

Her words halted there. Meeting Lilia's eyes, her mouth opened and closed numerous times. While seeming like she had more to say, Tina appeared to be at a loss for finding the proper words.

—Sakura. This, what should I do about this?

—Nn... Let's all get along together!

—Hey that's way too general.

Completely disappointed and shaking her head inside, Lilia stared at the girl. Tina trembled in surprise under the gaze. Her eyes faltered slightly as if wanting to look away, but she stopped herself and firmly met Lilia eye to eye.

And then, vigorously lowered her head.

"I am very sorry!"

Suddenly receiving an apology, the eyes of the unsuspecting Lilia darted about in confusion. Alisa was also struck speechless with her mouth hanging half open.

"Because of me, Miss Lilianne's engagement with the prince...! Even though, even though it was my fault...!"

—Sakura, what do I do here!?

—Do your best!~ would still be too harsh for you huh? Lilia, that girl has apologised, so do forgive her. And, you should apologise too. With that there should be no lingering conflicts. The bestest resolution!

She didn't really understand that last bit, but with panic quickly rising in Lilia her mind mostly stopped working and simply followed Sakura's words.

"Tina."

"Yes..."

"I will forgive you."

This time, Tina vigorously raised her head. Her expression painted in solid surprise. Upon seeing that expression, Lilia's heart conversely began to calm down.

"Speaking on the contrary though... Would you also please forgive all of my actions up to now?"

Being asked this, Tina's face contorted as if about to cry.

“That is, no good...”

“Is that so... That is unfortunate.”

Saying so Lilia once again began to fall into a panic. ‘What bestest result, wasn’t it useless!?’ was what she inwardly shouted at Sakura, but she could only sense the girl laughing frivolously in return. As she was about to tell her to think about this seriously,

“Such a thing... only favours myself too much.”

Lilia’s mind halted for just a moment, then immediately began pondering the meaning behind those words. Questioning what that was about, Lilia tilted her head, so Tina continued.

“I was the one at fault in angering Miss Lillianne. That is why, there should be nothing for Miss Lillianne to apologise for!”

—No, no matter how you think about it Lilia was the bad one. And even looking at the root cause the blame lies with a certain idiot prince who went and got captivated by someone else while already engaged.

—Sakura, I won’t allow you to badmouth His Highness.

—Muu... Okay I get it... But Tina really didn’t do anything wrong here alright? She was just living her ordinary life when the prince started talking her up, drawing your attention, and was bullied for it.

—Looking at things objectively I really was quite an unpleasant woman huh...

Seeing Lilia smiling in self derision, Tina seemed to interpret that as something and her cheeks stiffened as she once again lowered her head. While thinking it to be troublesome, Lilia still opened her mouth.

“Tina. You are blameless. The fault lies entirely with me. Therefore, please do not blame yourself.”

“Why such a thing...!”

“Then let us do this.”

At Lilia’s words, Tina raised her face. Lilia slowly approached her. Lilia seemed to find it somewhat adorable, seeing Tina with such an awfully frightened expression.

“Let us let everything up ’til now be water under the bridge.”

“Eh...? However...!”

“Instead, would you please become my friend?”

Tina’s eyes opened wide, and Alisa noticeably gasped. Sakura as well, with an ‘ooh’ was for some reason surprised. Even though she was the one who said to do things like this.

“But... Umm... Is it alright...?”

Tina looked up at Lilia with upturned eyes. Lilia tried to smile with all her might as she nodded.

“Yes. Please treat me well, Tina.”

“!! Yes...! Thank you very much! Please treat me well!”

Tina gave a vigorous bow. As Lilia was heaving a long sigh of relief in her mind,

—Dayum this girl is seriously too cute! I wish I had haunted her instead!

—.....

—Lilia? It was a joke? So hey, please don't start sulking on me?

—Oh just be silent, I wasn't sulking.

Pushing away her inner displeasure, Lilia formally held out her hand towards Tina. Tina was looking at the outstretched hand blankly, but soon realising Lilia's intention, firmly grasped it with both hands. Seeing the delighted Tina smiling broadly, for some reason Lilia also started to feel happy. Perhaps this was the girl's charm at work here. At the very least, this was something that Lilia herself was lacking in.

“Well then, Tina. Since we have become friends now, shall we speak to each other in a more comfortable manner?”

“Eh? You mean...”

“It's fine to use your casual tone okay? I will do the same.”

Tina's thoughts seem to freeze for a moment as she stiffened, but soon spoke in a small voice,

“O-Okay... I got it. Best regards, Miss Lilianne.”

“There's no need to address me in such a way. The people around me just call me Lilia.”

“Eh, umm... Miss Lilia...”

“Without the title.”

“Li-Lilia...”

“Yes. Very good.”

—Lilia. You're having fun here aren't ya.

—Isn't it fun to play with her, this girl.

—Hey hey now.

Though saying so Sakura also had a hint of enjoyment in her voice. Since there were no instructions from Sakura, this should be fine for now. Lilia thought so, and satisfied with herself, she once again turned her attention back to Tina.

“I've just returned, so there are still various things I must prepare. I will have to excuse myself here, Tina.”

“Y-Yes! I'm very sorry for keeping you, during such a busy time!”

Schizophrenia – Chapter 12

When Lilia's face showed displeasure at hearing her words, Tina flusteredly corrected herself.

"Uhhh... Sorry for keeping you, Lilia."

"Very good. I do not mind. Since with this we managed to become friends after all."

Saying so with a smile, Tina also gave an embarrassed laugh. Having exchanged their greetings, Lilia hurried towards her room. Alisa, who was silent throughout, naturally also followed suit.

"That was splendid, Mistress Lilia."

'Thank you' was Lilia's reply as she continued to advance. Almost as if she was escaping from that location.

—Sakura. Everything was fine back there right? She won't think it strange right?

—With all that's happened up until now, it's quite strange no matter how you think about it. There should be some suspicion of being fake yeah!

—Stop messing around.

—How cold~. Well, yup. You did well. In fact it was completely contrary to expectations, in a good way. I hadn't expected you to suddenly become friends.

Lilia's feet came to a halt. Behind her Alisa also stopped, tilting her head as she waited for Lilia's next move.

—Ahh, everything's fine okay. As I said earlier, you did great. You really worked hard!

—Then... Very well...

Lilia herself thought that she was being quite hasty back there. If anything it should have been better if she didn't declare a friendship right then and there. Especially due to having been treated so badly, Tina certainly should have been harbouring resentment at this point. Thinking about it, Lilia didn't even know what kind of face she should be making the next time they meet.

—I think that girl was simply happy about it though.

However, in the end she just couldn't fully believe in Sakura's words after all.

All of the rooms on the third floor were of the same construction, but they were quite large all the same. Lilia's room was no exception; while not as large as her room at the Estate, it was still reminiscent of a comfortable life. In the large room all the furniture needed for daily living were prepared, with nary a speck of dust on any of them. It was such a thorough cleaning, one would not think that the place had been left by its owner for over two weeks.

On one side of the room two doors stood out from the wall, leading to the separate bedroom and bathroom.

Lilia proceeded to the middle of the room, sat down on the prepared chair, and sighed deeply.

"Mistress Lilia. I shall go confirm the luggage now."

“Right. Please do.”

Alisa gave a bow and headed for the bedroom. Lilia’s belongings were delivered and carried in the day before. Therefore Lilia herself had arrived empty-handed.

—Well then, Lilia. What will you do from tomorrow on?

At Sakura’s prompt, Lilia gave it a little thought and answered.

—That’s not something to think too deeply about right. I will go to school.

—Uh huh. Hey escaping from reality is no good. I’m talking about regarding the prince and Tina.

Lilia’s words were cut off by an “Uu”, and she diverted her eyes to the window. Opposite to the door they entered from was a window that provided a good view of the outside scenery. After having looked out for a while,

—Ooi, Liliaaaa, come on baack.

Sakura called. With a cramped face, Lilia responded.

—I’m, thinking...

—Really... Then, what will you do when you meet the prince?

—I will avoid him as much as I can... I have already resolved to give up on His Majesty, though when I actually see him again, I have no idea how it will turn out.

—Well that’s a pretty wise judgement. Then, what about Tina? What will you do about your ‘friend’? This is certainly unavoidable.

This was something Lilia understood even without being told by Sakura. She definitely couldn’t ignore the matter concerning Tina. Saying that they should become friends, avoiding her immediately after and going back on her words was something she could not do.

It would be fine if it was just Tina. Meeting her, she could talk to her like she just did earlier. The problem was that in doing so, the prince would almost certainly appear as well.

—By the way, I won’t make a peep regarding this stuff you know. You should try doing what you want to do.

—Are you... Trying to test me?

—Well then, I wonder.

Sakura snickered happily. Lilia heaved a heavy sigh and then shook her head as if changing gears.

—Sakura. Let us study.

—Ohh, it sure is rare hearing that coming from Lilia!

While her words were mocking, it seemed Sakura was actually surprised. Other than on that first day, Lilia herself had never suggested studying. It was always Sakura urging her to do so. The simple reason being that Sakura’s lessons were so hard that she ended up feeling it was somewhat tough to go through.

Today however, she felt that it was better to do so. It could be said that this was more of her escaping from reality, but at the very least she wanted to concentrate on something else.

—But, how about we have a different person instruct you for today.

So came this response from Sakura. Lilia's eyes widened at the unexpected proposal. For Sakura, whose voice no one else could hear, how on earth could she possibly request for anyone else.

—Since Alisa is quite knowledgeable in magic, today let's learn some things regarding that. Alright, let's go ask her!

Now that she mentioned it, Lilia also recalled – during her time back at the mansion there wasn't a sliver of magic in her studies. Even as she learned everything else from Sakura, only the topics of magic and etiquette were not touched upon. On that point, Alisa was knowledgeable on these things Sakura did not know, almost as if she was there to perfectly compensate for what Sakura lacked. But even so, having to learn from a maid was something she wanted to avoid no matter what. Lilia made a difficult expression as groaned when,

“Mistress Lilia, is something the matter?”

Before she knew it, Alisa was standing before her. In her usual maid outfit, she looked at Lilia with worry filled eyes. Presenting a lightly bitter smile, she shook her head to assure Alisa that it was nothing.

“Alisa. If I am not mistaken, you are knowledgeable in magic yes?”

“Eh? Yes, indeed... Compared to the Madam it would seem like mere child's play, but I should know enough to the degree of being able to graduate from the academy.”

—What is with this girl, is she actually something amazing?

—Yup. In the first place for the sake of the magically inept Lilia they wanted a girl well versed in magic, which led to her being hired here.

—First I've heard about this.

—You should have heard about it. Though you probably just had no intention of paying attention around then.

That being the case, this was probably from before her shut-in period. If that was the case, she certainly paid no heed to anything she held no interest in then.

—About me being poor at magic, there was no such thing though?

—Like you can say that. Even though, always being compared to your mother, you'd be in self loathing at how you couldn't be as great as her.

—.....

Schizophrenia – Chapter 13

Lilia's grades in magic could be described as above average, or rather less than great. They weren't bad per se, but it was unfortunate that her target of comparison were her relatives. Lilia's mother, Ascha, gave birth to countless new magics. As a matter of course, it seemed her grades at the academy were consistently at the top. With such a mother, Lilia was constantly being compared to her by others.

If it were Madam Ascha, she would quickly understand such a thing though.

If it were Madam Ascha, she could write a magic formation of this degree even without looking though.

If it were Madam Ascha. If it were Madam Ascha. If it were Mother.

Compared to her, Miss Lilianne is... Compared to her, I am...

"Mistress Lilia."

At Alisa's call, Lilia came back to her senses with a gasp. Alisa seemed worried as she peered over into her face.

"Are you alright? You are not feeling ill anywhere are..."

Lilia shook her head and gave a bitter smile.

"I'm alright. Alisa, will you teach me magic?"

Alisa blinked several times before happily nodding.

Sakura listened to Alisa's lecture through Lilia. Lilia's existing foundation in magic often came in handy. While listening, Sakura recalled a portion of the things she had heard before coming here. Things regarding magic.

The magic in this world was not omnipotent like those found in novels or games. What was known as magic here, was interacting with the spirits that made up a part of the world, contracting them, and making use of their powers through magic formations. For the spirits, attached to each and every magic were their specific conditions for lending out their power. Breaking even one of these requirements would render everything null, even if you had prepared the magic formation.

The idea of "Magical Power" was non-existent in this world, where ability was measured only by one's talent for interacting with the spirits and the amount of knowledge one had in writing magic formations. This was the "magic" of the world.

Conversing with spirits and magic formation creation being the requirements, the skill of actually "using" magic was not needed. It was actually quite a simple thing in a certain sense.

"How nice..."

Sakura listened through Lilia to Alisa's explanations. She listened, it seemed, with great interest and apparent envy.

"I wish I could try it out as well..."

What a wonderful thing it was, that having a magic formation prepared meant anyone could use it. In that case, without a doubt, even she herself would be able.

Alisa opened up some sort of book and proceeded to explain the magic formations contained within one by one. While Lilia seemed to simply be listening to the explanation, Sakura was staring intently at the formations as if to consume them, driving their entirety into her head.

“It would be great if I could use them one day.”

Those enthusiastic words, if one were able to see her face, were muttered through a penetratingly cold smile.

With the setting sun, the streets began to quiet down into slumber, and with this, Lilia finally closed the book before her. Alisa was sitting across from her and, despite being before her own master, had fallen prostrate, limply splayed out on the table. Lilia herself was without anger, simply giving a wry smile thinking it was unavoidable.

“Alisa. It’s about time, let’s get some dinner.”

“Yes... I will... go bring something from the dining hall...”

Getting up, she headed for the door with uneasy footsteps. Lilia watched her back with concern, silently sending her off until she finally made her exit. Glancing at the small clock placed on top of the table, she tilted her head, as if slightly taken aback by how early it still was.

“How pitiful, to be exhausted from just this much.”

—Ahaha. What a luxurious confusion of common sense. For a normal person, studying without rest for six hours straight would leave them exhausted for sure.

—Wait just a minute. It’s almost as if you’re saying that I’m not normal. Besides, in the first place, you were the cause of all this.

—Whatever could you be talking about?

At Sakura’s delighted voice, Lilia pressed her forehead as she sighed.

Lilia’s life back at the mansion would start with waking up early every day and, other than meals and baths, consisted solely of studying. At least twelve hours were dedicated to studying every day. At the start, Lilia was also completely exhausted by the end of the day, but she started to get used to it after three days, so now she had no trouble at all with this lifestyle.

—Well hey, you don’t exactly hate studying. That’s why you grew accustomed so quickly and could continue.

—I haven’t exactly expressed my dislikes in general though.

—...Now that you mention it, that is true.

Sakura whispered to herself wondering if this too was different from her previous knowledge, but for now, Lilia chose to pay it no heed.

A short while later, Alisa, accompanied by another person dressed in maid attire, brought in the meal. The maid was employed by the academy, so without any single master, she took care of all the residents living here. Naturally, she wasn't alone in her work, and they weren't employed by the residents, so students like Lilia couldn't actually give them orders. At the very most, if they required the maids' help, it would simply be more of a request.

"Mistress Lilia, thank you for waiting."

Alisa set up the meal upon the table before Lilia. Displayed on the table was a meal resembling the menu of an Aldis family breakfast.

"What is this..."

"My deepest apologies, Mistress Aldis. Since it has become this time already, what could be prepared could only amount to this much."

The woman lowered her head deeply. She remained in that position awaiting Lilia's response, as if awaiting Lilia's angry shout to erupt at any moment. And thus, with wrinkles gathering between her brows and about to shout as if it were the natural thing to do,

—Lilia.

With Sakura's voice, she calmed down.

—There, deep breaths.

With Sakura's urging, she slowly took in a breath, and let it out. Once again bringing her gaze to the woman, she met the eyes of the confused maid.

"Mistress Aldis?"

Perhaps unable to comprehend the silent Lilia, the woman stared at her with doubt in her eyes. Lilia steadily returned her gaze and spoke.

"Don't mind it. It is unreasonable of me to request dinner at a time like this."

The woman's eyes went wide, and Alisa was smiling widely. Lowering her head again, the woman departed from the room.

—Is this okay for you?

—That was perfect! As expected of Lilia, seems like I'll fall for you!

—Eh, no way.

—Hey hey, don't reject my joke so seriously, that hurts...

At Sakura's weeping reply, the corners of Lilia's mouth raised just a tad bit.

"Well then let us dig in. You should take a seat over there, Alisa."

"There as in... Facing you, is it? Is it really alright?"

"I am saying that is it alright."

“Yes. Excuse me.”

Alisa seemed happy from top to bottom. While thinking it somewhat strange, she simply reached out her hands to begin her late dinner.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 14

The next day. Lilia opened her eyes after being awoken by Alisa. To Alisa who greeted her with a `good morning` while lowering her head, Lilia also plastered a smile on her face.

“Yeah. Morning, Alisa. What a nice day.”

“Yes. The weather is absolutely wonderful today. Will you be having breakfast in here?”

At Alisa’s prompt, Lilia thought for a bit. Perhaps her brain wasn’t spinning properly due to not having fully woken up yet, but for now, she felt that she wanted to avoid the dining hall.

“Very well. Can I leave it to you?”

“Understood.”

With a respectful bow, she departed from the bedroom, and seeing off Alisa’s back with her eyes, Lilia took a small sigh.

—Morning, Lilia. It’s the first day of school, huh! Looking forward to it aren’t ya!

—Morning. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t remind me, actually.

Honestly, even now, just thinking about school made her melancholic. However, this was the one thing she couldn’t run away from. All the more since she already spent the last day avoiding it. Letting out another small sigh, Lilia slipped out of bed.

She opened the closet in the corner of the room. Five sets of the school regulation uniform were prepared there, all perfectly in Lilia’s size. From those, Lilia grabbed a set and nimbly changed into it. Then, giving the appearance of being in thought, she promptly stood in front of a mirror.

—Really... Is it fine just like this? What about make-up?

—If it’s you, then there’s no need. You’re already super cute just like that, you know? If anything, the heavy cosmetics you’ve used up until now just made things feel worse.

—Is... Is that so...

Lilia staggered all the way to the bed, before sitting down, perplexed. To Sakura, who had asked what was wrong,

—It’s nothing... Just that I’m a little wounded from that.

Perhaps not understanding, Sakura gave off a puzzled impression, and without saying anything, Lilia let out a heavy sigh.

Sakura’s advice that her make-up was no good actually came right as she arrived. When heading to the school, just in case, she had put on her usual make-up before getting on the carriage. Thus, the words Sakura had told her right when she was preparing to retire for the night stung her heart even now.

—Lilia. That make-up is unpleasant. It’s gross. It’d be better if you stopped doing it from tomorrow onwards.

Nobody at all had let her know before. That was why she had thought that it was fine like that. At some point, she had started to imitate her mother and put on make-up by herself, but had the people around

her been thinking the same thing this whole time?

That said though, Sakura was still Sakura. It would have been great if she had let her know back at the estate. But for some reason or other, rather than doing that, why was she telling her right before she headed to bed the night before. It was like she was procrastinating until the last minute out of spite. There was a knock on the door. Following that, Alisa revealed her face.

“Mistress Lilia, I’ve come with your breakfast. Have you finished your preparations?”

“Yes... I’m going now.”

When Alisa saw Lilia, who had exited from the room, her eyes went wide. When she tilted her head to the side at Arisa, who was staring fixedly at Lilia, Alisa flusteredly lowered her head.

“Please excuse me. Because that was somewhat unexpected...”

“What was?”

“I see that today you will be going without make-up.”

Lilia’s face froze over. She asked Alisa, who was tilting her head to the side.

“Alisa. I’d like you to answer truthfully here, but.”

“Yes?”

“The make-up I’ve always done until now... how was it?”

This time it was Alisa who froze over. She seemed to be trying to say something, but kept shutting her mouth every time she opened it to speak. With just that, Lilia could already guess at Alisa’s feelings. Whether to answer truthfully and abide by Lilia’s command or to try and save face for her master, she was certainly lost for a decision. However, the fact that she was having trouble responding already made the answer here quite clear.

“It is fine. Thank you.”

“Ah... Um, my deepest apologies.”

“I said it’s fine. Alisa, I wish to change. If there is anything, please properly let me know.”

Alisa replied with a ‘certainly’ and bowed. Nodding in satisfaction, Lilia went to the seat where breakfast was prepared.

This was something that she only heard afterward, but Lilia’s back looked terribly small.

Having finished with breakfast, Lilia left her room to head towards the school building and descended down the stairs. Perhaps not aware of Lilia’s return, every single student passing by showed great surprise at seeing her. Lilia showed everyone who met her eyes a smile.

Before, she would only scowl at anyone she saw. She was actually intending the same as usual today as well, but she was stopped by Sakura.

—Lilia. Get Along.

Since it couldn't be helped, she followed Sakura's instructions and plastered the forced smile that she was confident had improved drastically over this week. According to Sakura, it was a smile that still had a ways to go, but everyone on the receiving end had their faces redden, looking away.

—We should hurry to class. We might end up running into that girl.

—I dunno, I think it's pointless though. From what I know of that girl and her personality... Well whatever. We'll see when we go.

Lilia frowned dubiously at Sakura's words. Then, she quickly came to understand the meaning of what was said.

“Mistress Lilia. It's Mistress Tina.”

As soon as she descended to the first floor, Alisa, who was walking in front, informed her of this arrival. She raised her face with a 'huh?' Perhaps due to the early hour, the entrance was still mostly devoid of people. And so, she quickly noticed.

At one of the tables arranged at the entrance was Tina. On the table, three cups were prepared. Perhaps she was talking to someone, or rather... Overcome with the feeling of a dreadful premonition, she was seriously wondering if she should go back or not. However, she definitely couldn't ignore her here, either. After all, Alisa was continuously staring as if expecting something.

—Your friend's here.

—Ugh...!

It was as if Sakura's words were completely voicing Alisa's thoughts on her behalf. With no other choice, Lilia approached Tina and placed a hand on her shoulder.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 15

“Morning, Tina.”

“Eh, ah... Ahh! Good morning!”

Tina got up energetically and lowered her head. Lilia gave a small sigh and brought her gaze to Tina with a glare. Just that was enough to shatter Tina’s expression.

“Umm, I mean... Morning, Lilia.”

“Good.”

With Lilia’s nod of approval, Tina let out a sigh of relief.

“Well then, what are you doing in a place like this?”

“Ah, I was waiting for you, Lilia.”

The bad premonition was spot on. With her cheeks stiffening, Lilia somehow managed to maintain her smile.

“Ohh. How come?”

“I just wanted to talk a little... And well, I wondered if becoming friends was really just a dream or not... Hey, Lilia. We’re really friends now, right?”

Tina asked with upturned eyes. This made Lilia’s eyes waver for just a moment before she returned her gaze to Tina. To be honest, she had intended to avoid her, along with the matter of the prince. She had spoken for the sake of not having to meet if it could be helped.

“What are you talking about? Mistress Lilia would never go back on her word.”

Lilia froze at Alisa’s words.

“Th-that’s right isn’t it! It is as Miss Alisa says. I don’t know what got into me!”

“Of course. This is Mistress Lilia we’re talking about here. There is no mistake about that.”

What’s with all this confidence here, thought Lilia.

—Deep... That really hit deeply...

Ah,ahaha... Don’t mind it, Lilia...

It seemed like all her options for avoiding Tina had disappeared. Heaving a heavy sigh, Lilia sat down across from Tina. Noticing this, Alisa also took a seat beside, and Tina happily started pouring the black tea into their cups.

“Well then, what shall we talk about?”

“Eh? Ah... I hadn’t thought about that...”

At that, Tina fell into silence, and Lilia and Alisa were also rendered speechless. To invite someone without having prepared any topic to talk about, what was this girl thinking? As Lilia was narrowing her eyes at the situation, Sakura's voice forced itself between her thoughts.

—Lilia. There's no preparation for just talking with a friend you know.

—Is that so?

—Yeah. Not for me anyways.

—Ahh, that's why you're like *that* huh.

—Hey wait a minute, whatever could you mean by *that*!

Ignoring the noisy complaints from Sakura, Lilia looked at Tina. Their eyes meeting, Tina clapped her hands with an "Oh right".

"Makeup."

"What?"

"Today, you don't have any makeup on huh. I almost didn't recognise you."

Lilia's movements froze, and Alisa's cheeks cramped up as Sakura laughed in amusement.

—She went headfirst into treading on a landmine huh! Lilia, Tina doesn't know anything, so no getting mad okay?

—Please rest assured. Since my anger is all directed at you.

—Nothing about that brings me rest or assurance though!?

After a short exchange with Sakura, she managed to calm her brewing agitation. Once again fixing the smile that was about to fall off her face, she replied.

"I was told that it didn't really suit me. That it was fine to just go like this. Does it look strange after all?"

"That's not true at all! Your current look is much better. As I thought, it seems that Lilia is quite a beauty after all."

"Eh? Then that means up until now... Eh?"

Lilia's eyes widened, and as if realising she had said something inappropriate, Tina hurriedly averted her eyes, casting her gaze at Alisa. Alisa herself was busily drinking her tea as if to stay completely uninvolved with this. A voice going "what's with this" was echoing through Lilia's head.

Lilia properly thought over Tina's words, and coming to an understanding, she smiled feebly.

—Sakura. It seems my sense of aesthetics are quite off, so from now on I'll be counting on you.

—Escaping from reality's no good you know? Let's work through this together.

Sakura's words pierced deep into her chest. Though a part of her was glad that Sakura had let her know, at the same time, thinking back, if this one hadn't said anything, she wouldn't have had to taste such

grief. However, looking in the long term, it was still good to have realised after all, so she decided to not say anything.

“Tina. Alisa. If you have some time, could you perhaps think of some more suitable makeup for me?”

When Lilia said so, Alisa made a wry smile, and Tina stiffened in surprise for a moment. Then, she immediately smiled and nodded.

“Okay! Leave it to me!”

After that, as if the tension was released, their conversation continued with idle chatter. The talk about Tina’s family was mostly highlighted with talk about the pet they were keeping at home. However, during their conversation, it was clear that one certain topic was being avoided.

“Tina. So this is where you were.”

Suddenly, the voice of the Mr. Avoided Conversation Topic himself came from behind Lilia. Lilia’s expression froze with her movements while Alisa took a glance at the owner of the voice, then looked worriedly at Lilia, and Tina’s expression, perhaps from restlessness, had distorted ever so slightly.

“Your Highness... You seem to be quite early today.”

Tina said, putting on a veil of calmness. However, she did not even bother trying to conceal the trembling in her voice. Perhaps not noticing, or maybe even just pretending to not notice, the source of the first voice, the prince of this country, simply continued the conversation.

“Yeah. I heard that Lilianne had returned. So I was worried about you and left a little earlier. Aren’t you quite early yourself today. You’re usually a bit later than this.”

“Yes. That’s... I thought, I’d have a little chat...”

“Hmm.”

The Prince took a few steps and moved beside Tina. Then he saw Lilia’s face. Since it wouldn’t do turn away from The Prince, Lilia also put on a forced smile and faced him.

She was seen. Since they were going to the same school, it was only a matter of time, but she didn’t think they’d meet this quickly. Her heart was racing, and nervousness gripped her chest painfully. And so, the Prince opened his mouth.

“A fresh face huh. New friend of Tina’s?”

Tina and Alisa had their breath catch in their throat. This Prince’s words were completely beyond their expectations. Lilia completely blanked out, with a completely dumbfounded expression on her face.

“Yo-Your Highness. Do you really not know?”

“Nn? Have we also met before? Now that you mention it, I do somewhat recall...”

Schizophrenia – Chapter 16

That conversation didn't enter her head at all. Her thoughts came to a complete halt, stuck in an absolute daze.

—Lilia! Get a hold of yourself!

With Sakura's shout, her mind slowly began to move again. At the same time, the Prince's words replayed themselves in her head. What did, this guy, just say?
The moment she remembered, Lilia's heart cooled rapidly.

—Sakura. I'm fine.

—But...

Fine. Fufu, rather my head has already cooled down. I wonder, how in the world I had come to love such a man.

Indeed, the engagement itself was something decided upon by their parents. But even so, Lilia loved the Prince. Though it was something like love at first sight, she did indeed love him. To that end, to not have him taken away by Tina, she had acted out her harassment.

Despite all that, she seemed to actually have been such an inconsequential existence to this man.

Certainly, Tina also said that she couldn't really recognise Lilia when she first saw her, but this man, even if it was as kids, should have seen Lilia without makeup on countless times before. And yet even so, he didn't recognise her.

Ah~ah, Lilia sighed in her heart. That to this man, she was such a worthless existence, was made very clear to her. With just that, it was more than enough.

And so, Lilia smiled.

“Eek...”

A short shriek leaked out from the surroundings. It seemed that before they knew it inquisitive gazes were being directed towards them. And witnessing Lilia's smile, a good number of people had brought their hands to cover their mouths. Even Tina and Alisa, when noticing the smile, had their cheeks cramp up slightly.

Lilia slowly rose from her seat and opened her mouth towards the Prince.

“It's been a while, Your Highness.”

“Nn? That voice... No way, is it Lillianne!?”

At the Prince's shocked voice, Lilia deepened her smile. As if thinking, *So he really hadn't noticed before huh.*

“You, what are you doing here? Are you trying to do something to Tina again?”

“There is no such thing. Just having a little chat with Tina is all. Peacefully, you know?”

“As if I'd believe that.”

The Prince didn't even try to hide the disgust in his voice. Really, how did she ever fall in love with man like this.

“My, it’s not as if I had the intention to have you believe me. I was simply stating the facts. Or perhaps, you want to make me out to be the bad guy even without me having done anything? You do don’t you. Yes, I am very well aware.”

Tina and Alisa paled hearing how she spoke. The Prince, on the contrary, had his face redden.

“You damn... There’s a limit to showing disrespect!”

“Oh my. This is indeed the school grounds. There is no such thing as *lèse-majesté* here. Or perhaps it’s that? You’ll forcibly drag me outside and charge me for *lèse-majesté*? Well, how frightening.”

The Prince’s face distorted with violent rage. Enjoying such a sight while laughing, before long she puffed out a scoff and smiled.

“Rest assured, Your Highness. I am doing no such things as to harass Miss Tina.”

“There’s no way I can believe such a...”

“After all...”

I no longer have any interest in you.

Perhaps not understanding the words given to him, the Prince hardened with his mouth agape like an idiot. Lilia laughed with a small giggle. Everyone in the surrounding area that had heard was made to take one step back.

“Well then, Miss Tina, I will be heading to the classroom.”

Tina, who had been left out of the conversation until now, trembled in surprise but immediately shook her head as a smile floated to her face.

“Yes. Thank you very much, Mistress Lilia.”

“Alisa. Please make sure to tidy up my room. You’re free to do whatever after that.”

“Certainly.”

Getting up, Alisa bowed respectfully. After nodding in satisfaction, thinking *well then*, Lilia turned to face the Prince.

“Good day, Your Highness. Please do not speak to me again.”

Saying so with a full-faced smile and leaving behind the completely frozen prince, Lilia departed the area.

Exiting the dorm, she entered the school building right beside it. Then, finding an empty classroom, Lilia went in and locked the door. Just like that, on the spot, she sat down as if collapsing.

“.....Nn”

Tears overflowed from her eyes. Even trying to bear it, the tears continued to endlessly overflow, drenching Lilia’s face and clothes. Also, without being able to completely hold in her voice, the sound her sobbing continued to leak out.

—Lilia...

The voice resounding in her head, perhaps in concern for Lilia, had a soft and gentle tone. But she was unable to give a response.

Her first love being the Prince, beyond just the engagement, she had thought that the Prince had at least held *some* fondness towards her. But that was just Lilia's desire, just an illusion. The Prince hadn't held even the slightest interest in her after all.

—Lilia. You're a good girl, so don't cry. Okay?

Even being told that, she couldn't stop despite her own will. If it could be stopped, she wouldn't be crying in the first place.

Just like that, she continued to cry for a while and then also noticed.

—...Hic.

Sakura's sobbing.

—Hey why are... you crying...

—After all... Thinking about Lilia's feelings even I'd end up getting sad...

That's just her doing her own thing, thought Lilia. In the end, what Sakura had was all just her own imaginings. It didn't seem like Sakura was really understanding her feelings.

Besides, Sakura continued.

—Even though I want to give you a hug... I can't do anything at all.

“...Nn”

Lilia involuntarily opened her eyes wide. She hadn't thought that Sakura would be thinking about such a thing. When she wondered about the reason, she immediately felt disdain towards herself. Sakura was always thinking about Lilia. That was why, this time as well, she was probably feeling hurt as if it were about herself.

—Sorry, Lilia... Sorry, that I can't do anything for you...

—Don't worry about it alright... No need to, worry about it...

Sakura and Lilia's sobbing overlapped. Sakura being inside Lilia, Lilia being in an empty classroom, the two continued to cry softly.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 17

—Lilia. Calmed down?

Hearing Sakura's voice, Lilia lifted her face. Just how much time had passed since she came in here? At the very least, classes should have already begun by this point. She really should have been rushing over, but Lilia only felt around her eyes and sighed.

—I've calmed down. Though, I can't really go to class.

—They're bright red huh, swollen too. Quite a pitiful face after having said all that to the Prince.

—Oh be quiet, I'm fully aware.

Getting to her feet, she lightly brushed the dirt from her clothes. Gently peeking out from the doors she examined the surroundings. She could faintly hear the sounds of conversation, but at least it seemed that there was no one immediately nearby. It would be easy to return to her room back at the dorm, but doing so now would probably cause Alisa to worry.

—We're just wasting time, so how about we go study at the Library or something?

—You're right... Let's do that.

Quietly leaving the classroom, Lilia maintained vigilance towards her surroundings as she began to move. Though it wasn't as if she would be dragged back to class if someone reported her truancy, she certainly didn't want anyone to witness her cried out face here. It wasn't something she wanted to find people discussing about later on.

Maybe due to most of the students being in class right now, she managed to arrive at the library on the second floor without running into anyone. Quietly opening the door, she slid herself inside.

Immediately shutting it once in, she breathed a long sigh of relief.

The library in this academy was quite large. Naturally, due to the large number of bookshelves lined up, it'd be hard to be seen by someone if one went deep inside. Especially now in the middle of lessons, one probably wouldn't be found by any students. Though there should definitely be a teacher here, around this time they would be running around organising the bookshelves. Since the often used books are generally gathered near the front, the back had mostly become a blind spot devoid of people.

Lilia went deep into the library. As she reached to the farthest reaches back, she took a breath. Looking at the shelves around her, placed here were a great number of books about this country's history. If it's here, there definitely shouldn't be anyone coming around.

—Well then, there's no pen or paper, but it's study time! I wonder what I should teach.

When Sakura taught Lilia, her voice would always be full of vigour. While a joyous voice, she was also quite strict. Though there were hardships too, just hearing Sakura's joyful tone, Lilia could feel the motivation to work even a little harder. Whenever Lilia got one of the difficult questions prepared by Sakura correct, she would become overjoyed as if it were her own success leading Lilia to the point where she was the one to start feeling embarrassed.

This time too she was happily thinking away, but Lilia interrupted that.

—Sakura, before that, I'd like to get your opinion on something though.

—Nn? What would that be?

—From now on... I wonder how should I be facing Tina.

Ahh, Sakura groaned and fell silent. She was probably thinking up something regarding that. Lilia also tried to give it another thought, but still didn't know what kind of face she should have the next time she sees Tina.

It can be assumed that the Prince likes Tina, as well as that Tina also did not particularly dislike the Prince. Tina hasn't exactly said that she liked the Prince, but it was probably alright to think that way. At least if she didn't think like this, she'd be losing all face in such a situation.

Lilia had completely broken off everything with the Prince. Lilia was the one rejecting here, so any reconciliation was almost certainly impossible. Tina, who had become her friend, was thrust right in the middle between Lilia and the Prince. She ended up feeling quite bad about creating such a situation.

—Worried about Tina?

At Sakura's question, Lilia snorted.

—This has nothing to do with that girl okay. I just don't want to feel responsible for getting someone caught in the crossfire here.

—Yup. Let's just leave it at that then.

—What do you mean by *that*...

—Ahaha. Back to the real topic, it's probably fine to not worry about that too much though. Tina will probably, to not have you two bump heads, act with a certain degree of caution in mind, that's what I think. The Prince will most likely also avoid touching on the topic of you, so as long as you don't stir things up, I don't think there's any reason to worry.

Would it be as simple as that? Lilia still didn't really know what Tina's temperament was like, so she couldn't come to a solid conclusion.

—Rather, I think if you were to keep your distance, it'll just cause Tina to mind things more. Wouldn't it be fine to just act as usual?

—Though that would be kind of difficult.

—Yup. Do your best!

—Talking like it's none of your business...

Though she was smiling wryly, she did not object. Lilia couldn't come up with any other answers herself after all.

—Well, with that, now it's studying!

Just as Sakura was exclaiming *now*—

“Oh...? Whom might be present here?”

—that voice was heard at the same time.

“...!”

With a gulp, Lilia slowly turned around. There stood a boy she didn't recognise. It was boy with short silver hair, and by the school uniform he was wearing, it could be seen that he was student here.

Although she had no recollection of him, it was probably not so for the boy. There was hardly anyone in this academy that did not know about Lilia.

That was what she thought but.

“Umm, Senpai, is it? Is it fine to not be in class?”

It seemed that he didn't recognise her, but whether he really didn't know or was just acting so, Lilia couldn't determine.

—Sakura. Do you know about this kid?

—Sorry, no idea. Though he doesn't seem like a bad guy...

—That so...

In that case, let's see how this turns out for a bit. Lilia decided so and fixed a smile to her face.

“I had something to look up so I'm here for that. What about you?”

—Such convincing innocence! It's innocent Lilia!

—Be quiet you.

Presenting a retort to Sakura who shouted in her head, she sought for a response from the boy. The boy quickly answered.

“Well... I am studying here. I don't really fit in with the class... Fortunately, my grades on exams are not too bad, so they're leaving me be.”

—Eh, is that really okay?

—It is indeed. As long as you can get results on the exams, they'll allow it even if you're absent from lessons. If not for that, I wouldn't be leaving school for two whole weeks would I.

—Ahh, I see. Now that you mention it that is so.

However, thought Lilia. You can certainly study on your own, but that can't be said to be very efficient. Even if you didn't fit in with the class, she felt you ought to at least attend the lessons. When she voiced some of these doubts, the boy only smiled vaguely.

—Perhaps there are some circumstances, huh.

—What'll you do?

—It's not as if he was seeking me for help, so let's just ignore it.

She just happened to run into the boy after all. She didn't have any responsibility to go help him, and Lilia herself wasn't someone who really had the leisure to do so anyways. Not in terms of time nor, more importantly, emotionally with what she was already dealing with.

"I won't pry any deeper then. Well do your best."

Schizophrenia – Chapter 18

Saying so, Lilia made to walk past the boy. However, before she passed by him, the boy held out something to her. Seeing the thing, it turned out to be a small handkerchief.

“What?”

“Well... It seemed like you had been crying so... If you'd like, please use it.”

Here not only Lilia, but Sakura as well was surprised. Wondering if he somehow, actually didn't know anything about Lilia.

“You... Really don't know who I am?”

Asking him directly, the boy only tilted his head in response.

“Have we perhaps met somewhere before?”

Hearing that, Lilia was momentarily dumbfounded, and then a smile involuntarily leaked out on her face.

Thinking for a moment, she said,

“I'm Lilia. It's nice to meet you.”

“Ah, umm... Ray, here.”

It seemed like he had noticed that Lilia was leaving out her family name for some reason, so Ray too didn't attach his surname.

“Ray huh. I'll make sure to remember. Well then I'll be... What is it?”

As she was heading for the exit, Lilia's feet quickly came to a halt. Lilia's sleeve was gently being held onto by Ray. When Lilia tilted her head, Ray said with upturned eyes,

“That is... Would you like to talk for just a little bit? Being by myself is sort of lonely...”

Then just return to your own class, thought Lilia, but even she probably wouldn't just say such a thing out loud.

Lilia herself wasn't really in the condition to return to class, so it wouldn't be bad to keep him company. Lilia concluded so and nodded with an ‘Alright’.

Though it was her first time entering the room, she had heard about this place before. Prepared for purposes like collaborative research and for people who wanted to study by themselves, ten of these rooms were lined up in a hallway connected from the library. To use these rooms one would have to request it beforehand, but starting last year, she had heard something about how one room was continuously in use by someone. That was probably referring to this room.

On the table reference texts and books on various things were arranged. Ray put the book he brought back on a corner of the table and retrieved a single chair from a stack and placed it before Lilia.

“Here you go.”

“Thanks.”

Thanking him she sat down. Ray sat down facing Lilia there.

—Seems like this is where he really studies huh.

With Sakura’s voice, Lilia brought her gaze to the learning materials arranged on the table. They were the same things as what she had been using a year ago. It seems that he was only one year younger than Lilia. As she stretched out to reach for the reference book, Ray flusteredly said,

“S-sorry, it hasn’t been tidied...! I’ll get to it immediately!”

“It’s fine, no worries. So you study by yourself here?”

“Yes... That’s right.”

Ray slumped back down as he answered. As Lilia was flipping through the reference book, she stealthily sent her gaze to the paper in front of Ray. The notebook there was opened, and questions full of blank answers were written inside.

“So there are parts you don’t get here?”

Eh, Ray let out an idiotic voice, and quickly noticing that the notebook he left lying open had been seen, he frantically began to clean it up.

“Sorry I’m so sorry! I’ve shown you such an unsightly...!”

“It’s quite alright. Rather, how’s the studying?”

“Uhhh... Yes, there are some parts that I don’t really understand...”

“Please show me.”

And so, the notebook that Ray was going to tidy up was quite naturally plundered by Lilia. Looking inside, she began to confirm the places left blank. With an *I see*, Lilia quickly closed the notebook.

“I’ll teach you.”

“Eh?”

“It’ll probably serve to kill some time. I will teach you. Please open your reference book.”

Returning the notebook with those words, Ray was speechless as his mouth hung open. Lilia felt just a slight bit irritated at the state Ray was in and tapped the table with her finger.

“Quickly please.”

“Ye, yes!”

Ray hurriedly opened the reference book. Lilia moved beside Ray, looked at the questions, and thus began to explain.

—Un. The heck is this.

No one gave an answer to Sakura’s muttering.

“Let’s leave it at this for today.”

When Lilia said so and closed the reference book, Ray let out a sigh of relief. Seeing that Lilia narrowed her eyes, and as she was about to open her mouth,

—This is your fault, forcing him to study six hours straight without any breaks though? You shouldn’t be getting angry alright?

—Ahhh... So that much time has already passed huh.

—Yup. As expected it was pretty tough on poor Ray. ...It seemed like you were having fun so I didn’t say anything though.

Just like Sakura said, Lilia felt some enjoyment from it. Especially since Ray’s memory was good, he’d remember something after only being taught once. In that regard, teaching was quite enjoyable. Just, seeing Ray fallen limp from exhaustion, she couldn’t help but reflect a little at having somewhat overdone it.

“Sorry about that, Ray.”

At Lilia’s words, Ray vigorously raised his head.

“No no! Your lesson was very easy to understand! Thank you very much!”

And so he bowed his head with great vigour. Lilia only replied with a curt ‘I see’, but the corners of her mouth couldn’t help as they naturally turned upwards.

—Ahaha. Lilia, you seem happy.

—As if.

“Well then, it’s about time, I’ll be going now.”

“Yes. Thank you very much for today.”

Leaving Ray, who bowed his head once more, Lilia quietly exited the room.

In the Library, there was still barely any sign of other people. It seemed like classes had ended quite some time ago. To not leave Alisa worrying, she made to return straight back and headed for the exit.

“Miss Lilia!”

Stopped midway, Lilia halted her feet. Turning around, there stood Ray.

“What’s the matter?”

“Umm... If you have the time, it would be great if you could perhaps come again?”

Lilia slightly widened her eyes. She thought about what Ray’s intentions might be, but nothing came to mind. What could possibly be the reason that this boy was saying such a thing?

—Lilia, sometimes, can be quite dumb.

—Ha? You picking a fight?

—Not at all. It’s just, yeah. Never mind.

The presence of Sakura's wry smile was transmitted. Not understanding what she meant, Lilia only tilted her head.

"Alright. If I feel like it, I'll come again."

Not knowing his intentions, she couldn't make a promise. Not having a reason to refuse either she answered so, but,

"Yes! I will be waiting!"

Ray had a very delighted smile.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 19

From the Library she headed straight back to the dorm. She sensed some inquisitive gazes from the students she passed along the way, but she ignored them all. If they came to talk to her, she would give a reply, but she had no obligation to respond to simply being looked at. When she entered her room in the dorm, she was greeted by Alisa's bow.

"Welcome back, Mistress Lilia."

"I'm back. ...Were you in this room the entire time?"

"Yes. That is so?"

"It would've been fine to go out somewhere too you know."

"I had not received permission so..."

Quite the inflexible one, thought Lilia with a slight frown, when Sakura gave a wry laugh.

—It's the first day back after all. She probably stayed in the room to be ready so that you could return at any time right. Well, it's also true that she didn't receive any permission, but even if she did, she probably would have stayed here the whole day anyways.

—Am I really that unreliable?

—Yup. After two weeks of being a shut-in, you can't really refute that can you.

—Muu...

Since she thought that it was just as Sakura said, she couldn't rebut. She already had a precedent for becoming a shut-in, so Alisa was bound to be worried.

—Besides, you actually did skip out on class too huh!

—That was... No, you're right.

—Yaaai, you delinquent~

—Oh shut up.

She returned her gaze to Alisa. Alisa was worriedly looking at Lilia.

"Alisa. I'll be fine. You can feel free to go out from tomorrow on okay."

"Is, that so?"

"Yes. Well then, I'll be studying in the bedroom. Could you call me if there's anything?"

"Certainly."

Sent off with a bow by Alisa, Lilia entered the bedroom. Closing the door, she headed for the table at the corner of the room. The bookshelf beside the table was probably organised by Alisa, as the learning materials were neatly arranged by subject.

—Sakura. I'll be counting on you today as well.

—Alri~ght. Get out the pap~er, get out the pe~n, let's give it our a~ll!

Lilia did as instructed and placed paper and a pen on the table, and while hearing Sakura's energetic voice, a slight smile leaked out on her face.

She was putting down Sakura's words on the paper. What she was being taught, currently, was arithmetic. Within arithmetic there was something called an abacus, and listening to random numbers from Sakura, Lilia was calculating the sums in her head. Since they couldn't prepare the tool Sakura talked about, all of the calculation was done with a mental image instead.

—Lilia. Someone's here.

Lilia lifted her head upon hearing Sakura's words. Turning over the paper with various numbers written on it, she turned towards the door. A knock immediately followed.

"Mistress Lilia. There is a visitor."

Lilia frowned in doubt. There shouldn't have been anyone in the school who'd come to visit her. Previously she did have some 'followers' of sorts around, but since coming back, there hadn't been any sign of them either.

"Who?"

"It's Mistress Tina."

Lilia eyes widened in surprise. They had just met in the morning after all, so she hadn't expected her to come visit already. What purpose could she possibly have come for?

—No you see Lilia, you can't be wondering about purpose and stuff. You're friends right?

—What are you talking about, this is the upper class nobles' floor after all, it's not a place you can come to just for the reason of 'vising a friend' you know.

—No, but... Huh? Did Lilia just make more sense than me!? Oh the disgrace!

—Hey what are you trying to imply here.

While feeling somewhat dissatisfied from Sakura's remark, Lilia stood from her seat. She went with Alisa to the door of the room. Opening the door, there stood a nervous looking Tina.

"Mistr... Lilia. Good evening."

Still having trouble with the honorifics, thought Lilia, though she decided to not say anything since at least she caught herself midway this time.

"Good evening, Tina. Is there some matter?"

"It can't really be called a matter but... If you'd like, want to have dinner, together?"

"That's... I don't mind, but is that okay for you?"

"Yup. Of course. I shouldn't need anyone's permission to have dinner with a friend right?"

One way or another, she was starting to see the reason why the Prince came to like this girl. Getting along with someone from the prideful noble bunch in the first place was impossible, but even if that wasn't the case, this girl was probably very easy to get along with regardless.

“Alright. Shall we go? Ah but that was just secondary right? The real topic is?”

“Eh? Real topic? What?”

Seeing Tina adorably tilt her head slightly to the side in confusion, Lilia cheeks twitched. She was aware of Alisa smiling wryly behind her. For some reason she felt a little embarrassed, and her cheeks became tinted slightly red.

—Fu. So what I said was correct after all. My win.

—Ha?

—Wai-that's scary Lilia! I was just kidding!

Lilia clicked her tongue with a 'tsk' in her thoughts, and 'hii-', Sakura let out a frightened voice. Leaving that Sakura alone, Lilia affixed a smile to her face.

“Sorry, please don't worry about it. Shall we go?”

Tina let out a sigh of relief and nodded 'yes'.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 20

There were two dining halls located in the first floor of the dorm. The first was built as a large hall, used by most of the students living in the dorm. The other one was a size smaller than the first, but it was for the exclusive use of the upper class nobles. According to the school regulations, on school premises, a person's status was irrelevant. However looking at the students' rooms and dining hall, it was clear that the upper class nobles were treated differently after all.

This was the first time entering the larger dining hall for Lilia. Because she normally used the other one, coming here in the first place was impossible. Since that was the case, it was probably natural that the entire room fell quiet when she came in.

Lilia slowly swept her gaze across, through the quieted dining hall. Anyone that met her gaze all flusteredly averted their eyes. Feeling some discomfort, she thought it might be best to give up and go back after all when,

"Lilia, what's wrong? Come let's go."

Came Tina's voice. Turning around, she met eyes with Tina who was looking at her with a smile. Not avoiding her gaze in the slightest, a cheerful smile.

"Yes, you're right. Let's go."

The corners of Lilia's mouth also ended up lifting up into a smile. The discomfort and such felt just earlier were cleanly erased and forgotten.

Countless long tables were lined up in the dining hall. Not paying any mind to the hushed atmosphere, Tina headed inside. Finding two seats together, she beckoned to call Lilia over.

Not giving notice to the quietness was probably a courtesy towards Lilia. Just when she was feeling somewhat grateful for that,

"You just sit tight here Lilia. I'll go to order. Nevertheless, I wonder why it's so quiet here today?"

Wrong. She actually just didn't notice anything in the first place.

—Perhaps this girl, is somewhat of an airhead?

—I wonder about that huh.

"Lilia, I'm ordering for you too, so what would you like?"

"I'll leave it to you. I'll just have what you're getting."

"Got it. I'll be right back!"

Saying that, Tina headed for the inner part of the dining hall where the counter was. Behind the counter was a crowd of cooking staff, where you ordered and received your food to bring back to your seat. The food in the dining hall was all free of charge and you could ask for more helpings as you please.

Sinking into her seat, Lilia slowly let out her breath. The surrounding students were finally starting to talk normally again. With the attention on her letting up, she could finally calm down.

Incidentally Alisa was not with them. Saying that she didn't want to be a bother, it seems like the girl headed for the dining hall outside of campus.

Lilia casually looked around. At some point many of the seats in front and to her sides had been vacated. Lightly glancing around, there was a group holding their food trays quickly moving away. They had probably run away in fear of Lilia. She ended up feeling just a tinge of loneliness from that.

—Tina really is a good girl huh.

—Yeah... I won't become like that though.

—Yeah no I'm definitely not looking for that. That sort of Lilia would be kinda gross.

—I'm really gonna get angry you know?

—Ahaha.

As she was chatting with Sakura in her mind, Tina returned carrying two trays. Placing one in front of Lilia, Tina sat down beside her. On the trays Tina brought over were two menu items, steaming warm white rice and fried vegetables with meat.

—No matter how you look at it isn't this treatment a bit too unwelcoming!

—I was under the impression that it was just a difference in rooms... So this is the kind of dinner they have over here.

The food wasn't even brought to over for them. Looking at the students sitting a bit away from them, their food wasn't too different from Lilia's.

“What's wrong, Lilia?”

At Tina's question, Lilia hurriedly shook her head. Putting on a smile, she replied that it was nothing.

After offering their thanks for the meal, Lilia's movements came to a halt. She was lost as to how she was supposed to eat the meal. In the first place, there was no knife and fork. What were these two strange sticks for?

“Ah, perhaps Lilia, you've never used chopsticks before?”

“Ahh... That is true. I've not.”

“I see... I probably should have asked for something else. What to do...”

“Tina. Let me see how you use it. I'll learn from watching.”

“Eh...”

Tina looked lost for a moment, but quickly regained her focus and nodded. She held the things called chopsticks for Lilia to see. With an unfamiliar holding method, the chopsticks moved with the movement of Tina's fingers and actually picked up a piece of the fried vegetables for Lilia to see. Nodding in understanding, Lilia tried to imitate Tina's movements. Perhaps due to this being her first time it was quite difficult, but after moving the sticks repeatedly she managed to get the hang of it. Just like Tina, she picked up a piece of the fried vegetables and brought it to her mouth.

“Yeah. It's not bad.”

Lilia nodded in satisfaction, while beside her Tina really seemed befuddled this time.

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah, umm... Lilia, you seem to be really clever or... Even though it took me quite a while to be able to properly use chopsticks...”

“Is that so... This thing...”

Moving the chopsticks around, Lilia muttered disinterestedly. She quickly returned to eating.

—Somehow, Lilia you really seem to be a bundle of talent or something... Quite impressive. Maybe it’s because of your good memory?

—My, nothing will come of your flattery though.

—The personality is horrible though.

—.....

Lilia’s face twitched at the layering of sarcasm in their conversation. Remembering that there were gazes from the surroundings on her, she quickly hid her expression. She forcibly covered it with a smile.

“How is it, Lilia? The food over here.”

“Well... It really is food for commoners, but it’s not bad.”

She didn’t think that simply frying random vegetables and meat together could make something taste as good as this. It was probably also due to the fact that she wasn’t too familiar with eating such things, but the freshness of the experience was quite delicious. It might be good to come again at the next opportunity, she thought as she carried the vegetables to her mouth,

—Migyaaah!

“Waaah!”

Sakura’s shriek made Lilia give a loud shout that surprised even herself. Tina stopped moving as she stared at Lilia with her eyes dotted in surprise, and their surroundings were also examining Lilia’s expression wondering what had happened. When Lilia calmed down, driving away the surrounding gazes,

“It’s nothing at all, ohohoho.”

Even she felt that line unnatural, but now wasn’t the time to be worrying about that. Lilia called out to Sakura.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 21

—Hey, what's wrong with you. You okay?

—Ahh, Lilia... I'm already done for...

—Eh, hey wait... What's wrong?

Hearing that truly strained voice made Lilia's expression pale. She had never before heard such a meek voice from Sakura. She waited anxiously for Sakura's response.

—Green peppers, bitter...

She lowered her gaze and looked at the fried vegetables. There were green peppers in it.

—Just, with this...? I didn't really taste much of the green peppers though...

—You did taste it... Lilia you meanie...

Hearing that usually energetic voice continue to sink, it made Lilia worry as well. While feeling sorry, she apologised in her head.

“Lilia, what's wrong?”

It was Tina's voice. Not knowing how she should answer, Lilia ended up shutting her mouth. Even so the worry in Tina's eyes didn't go away, and Lilia gave a small sigh.

“I'm sorry, Tina. I just remembered some urgent business, so I must excuse myself here.”

She hadn't even managed to eat half of her dinner yet. In fact, her appetite was still unsatisfied, but she couldn't just keep going with Sakura in this state. Lilia rose from her seat and showed a smile to the dumbfounded Tina.

“I'll say this now, but please rest assured that this isn't because of anything you did. Well then, see you later.”

Lightly waving her hand, she departed. After exiting the dining hall, Lilia hurried to her room.

Lilia rushed into her bedroom and, upon returning to her room, pulled out a drawer from the table. In there was a small cloth bag. It was of simple make, but the material itself was high class. Lilia opened it and checked the contents. There was a sizable amount of copper and silver coins inside. With a small nod, she called out to Sakura.

—Sakura. Can you hear me?

—Nn... What is it?

There was a response, but it was still just as weak. She didn't think a single piece of green pepper could have caused her to become like this.

—We're going to head out now.

—That so...

—Is there anything you want to eat? Though we can't go too far.

—Fruit!

The energetic voice rang in her head momentarily. *How mercenary* thought Lilia as she smiled wryly, leaving the room. She soon ran into Alisa.

“Mistress Lilia? It’s already late so, I think it best to hold off on going outside...”

“R-right... I understand.”

Her cheek stiffening, Lilia dejectedly returned to the room. That Sakura’s energy that she finally managed to restore all faded out again was also apparent.

—Uuu... There is no God or Buddha huh...

She didn’t understand the meaning, but the lamentation was clearly conveyed.

“By the way Mistress Lilia.”

Keeping the door open until now, Alisa opened her mouth. Dubiously turning around,

“It’s a visitor.”

Behind Alisa, there stood Tina.

“Tina? What’s wrong? What about dinner?”

It hadn’t been too long since she left from the dining hall. So why was Tina already here? Lilia wondered while waiting for her words, when Tina timidly presented the thing in her hands. It was a small paper bag. Though thinking it strange, she approached Tina and received the bag. Looking inside, there was a mandarin like fruit.

“Umm... Dinner, didn’t seem to be to your tastes so... Please have some of this.”

And then she vigorously lowered her head in apology. Lilia was flabbergasted as she opened her mouth, it ending up lamely hung open.

“Well, I’ll be heading back to the dining hall then. See you later, Lilia.”

Saying so she made to leave the room. Lilia hurriedly called her for her back.

“Wait.”

“Eh...? What’s wrong? Ah, is it that you dislike fruits as well?”

“Of course not. Just... Today, there really was something unexpected that came up. If it’s alright with you, please do invite me again sometime?”

In fact, she felt that the dinner itself was quite tasty. If not for Sakura, she probably would have finished it all. As expected, the place would be somewhat difficult for Lilia to enter alone, so she wouldn’t think of going again without being invited by Tina.

Tina seemed to be blankly befuddled, but before long, an instant smile came to her face.

“Yup! I’ll invite you again sometime!”

And so, she waved her hand and left. Seeing her off, Lilia let out a sigh of relief as she closed the door.

—Lilia! Mandarins! I don't know if they're actually mandarins but! Mandarins! Let's eat!

Instantly, Sakura's voice rang out in her head. Lilia smiled wryly and held out the paper bag to Alisa.

"Sorry, but could you prepare a few of these?"

"Yes. Certainly."

And so as she stuffed her cheeks with the fruit Alisa peeled,

—Ahh, it's delicious, I'm in heaven...

—Oh you...

Slowly savouring the flavour, she smiled wryly. Somehow interpreting that smile, Alisa also beamed affectionately.

The next day. Going to the first floor entrance, Tina was there just like yesterday waiting for Lilia. However, perhaps minding the matter with The Prince from yesterday, she only exchanged her greetings.

—What's with that girl. She waited for me just to say hi?

—What a good girl.

—What a waste of time.

—Lilia's thinking never changes eh!

Sakura was lamenting over something again, but she probably didn't need to pay it any mind. She briskly headed for the school building.

The school building was beside the dormitory. A three story stone building, it was made to be quite a large structure. Lilia's classroom was on the second floor. She still kept her brisk pace walking through the hallways. There wasn't actually any need to hurry that much, but it couldn't be helped that she felt she was drawing the gazes of the students around her. This wasn't just an overly self-conscious imagination either, as when she actually looked at the people she felt gazes from, they would hurriedly avert their gazes when she met their eyes.

The following act from The Prince's engagement annulment was all the uproar from yesterday after all. It was obvious that she would gather a lot of attention. If only it had happened somewhere where there were less people, but it's a bit too late for that now.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 22

The senior section separates classes into their respective years, but there is also a class containing students from various levels. This was the class Lilia is a part of, a class for upper nobles. The school equipment and furnishings were the same for even commoners, and it was only the class that is segregated from the rest. Since there would be no end to trouble if they were to be put with everyone else.

Entering the classroom, Lilia went straight to her seat. The seats were spaced in six columns and five rows. Lilia's seat was front row. Probably because it was so early, there were only a few people. Unapproached by anyone, she managed to sit down at her desk.

—Lilia. You gonna be okay?

—What is it?

—Well... the seat beside you.

Having it pointed out by Sakura, Lilia remembered something she had forgotten about until now. Looking at the seat to her right. The Prince's seat.

—Definitely not alright.

—Ain't that the truth. What're you gonna do?

—Yeah, let's see...

There's no helping that the Prince was in the same class. That was just how school was, so she could make do. But having an adjacent seat was a different story. Lilia shot up from her seat, and turned her gaze towards the window.

Three students were having a friendly chat. They were all people Lilia recognised, but the red haired character in the middle was especially familiar.

Krystel Agnis. The eldest daughter of the Marquis Agnis, she was referred to as Kris. It couldn't be said that she particularly got along with Lilia. Rather, you could even say that they were enemies, but at the moment she was the lesser of two evils. Lilia quietly walked towards Kris.

“Oh?”

Kris soon noticed as well. Floating a mean-spirited smile, she gazed at Lilia. Lilia hated this smile.

“Morning, Kris. A bit of your time?”

“My my, good morning, Miss Lillianne. What may I help you with?”

Her speech was polite, but the ridicule hanging on to every word was thoroughly conveyed. Absolutely unpleasant.

“I'd just like to ask for a small favour.”

“A favour is it? If it is something within my capabilities, by all means. In the Duke's name, do bestow upon myself your commands.”

It was a thoroughly irritating way of speaking. But if she rose up to her provocation, the conversation will never get anywhere. Lilia ignored all the goading and continued to speak.

“Our seats, would you be willing to switch with me?”

Kris’s eyes went wide with surprise. That was to be expected, as Lilia’s seat, the seat beside the prince, was something Lilia had half threatened her way into obtaining. Everyone, the prince included, knew about this.

“I had heard that something happened between you and His Highness but... Seriously?”

In her astonishment Kris’s speech returned to her normal tone. Lilia nodded.

“That’s right. If nothing else I definitely don’t want to have the adjacent seat. You had said that you’d wanted to be beside His Highness before so, it’s not a bad deal is it?”

“That, it is not but... What are you scheming?”

She glared at Lilia with open hostility. Lilia shrugged, signalling ‘nothing at all’, and responded.

“You see, I’m already through with His Highness.”

“That so... Then even if you want switch back later, it ain’t happening alright?”

“I won’t. I will swear so on the Aldis name.”

Even so, Kris looked at Lilia with suspicion, but quickly turned it into a broad smile. She quickly gathered the belongings on her desk. What’s more just for the occasion, albeit simple, she even gave it a quick cleaning.

“Well then, here you are Mistress Lilianne. From now on this seat is yours.”

“Th-thanks... I didn’t think you’d go that far. I haven’t cleaned mine at all though...”

“I don’t mind. Well then I’ll be off. Ufufu...”

Leaving behind her followers, she headed towards the place that used to be Lilia’s seat. After that, the two followers hurriedly went after her. Somewhat understanding what Kris must be feeling, Lilia made a bitter smile, and sat down in the vacated seat.

—With this I can rest easy. Ahh, but if possible I’d like to be further back...

—Quite rare for the attention seeker Lilia huh.

—That was only because I wanted to attract the attention of his highness. Now though, I don’t really care anymore.

After a little while, the rest of the students had arrived. Negotiating with the student in the seat behind her, she exchanged seats with them. That was repeated three times, and Lilia finally acquired the window seat in the last row. If it’s here, she shouldn’t stand out.

—That was some good negotiating if I do say so myself.

—No, here’s the thing Lilia. That was because you were basically coercing them you know. Lilia’s requests, to most people, would be taken as an order. I’ll overlook it for today, but please try to restrain yourself in the future.

—I was just trying to normally ask for a favour though... I understand....

She had really just been trying to ask for a normal favour, but it seems like the other parties felt like they were being commanded. It's no wonder that all of them had fear in their eyes. It was the first time she ended up feeling that the Aldis name was a hinderance.

Sitting in her chair, as she took a breath,

“Miss Lilianne!”

A familiar voice reached her ears. Lilia's expression stiffened slightly. Following the voice, three female students came into the classroom. They were walking straight towards Lilia.

“Miss Lilianne, so you had already arrived. We were very worried!”

One of the three said, and the other two nodded repeatedly.

“Sorry. I'm alright now.”

“Ahh, that's great! What a relief. By the way... Why might you be sitting in the corner of the class like this? Don't tell me, Miss Krystel has...?”

The girls' eyes narrowed. Seeing that, Lilia openly heaved a sigh. Lilia also understood the feelings of the girls very well, but the current her who wanted to stay out of anything troublesome felt a slight annoyance at this. The three who noticed Lilia's sigh were visibly flustered.

“Uh, umm... Miss Lilianne...?”

“It's nothing. It was I who desired this seat. You must have heard about the rumours between me and His Highness?”

“Well, yes... They seemed like baseless rumours so I hadn't paid them any mind though.”

“They're the truth. From now on, I will do my utmost to avoid being involved with His Highness so please also act accordingly.”

The three's eyes widened in astonishment together. That was probably to be expected, though. The Lilia before she shut herself away would try to be by the prince as much as possible after all. It wouldn't be strange if they said that they couldn't believe it.

“Miss Lilianne!”

The girl who was speaking raised a loud voice. Lilia reflexively raised her guard at the suddenness of it.

“What?”

“Please don't feel down! If it's Miss Lilianne then you can definitely take back His Highness's heart!”

Schizophrenia – Chapter 23

Take back? Who will? Take whose heart?

Lilia's smiling mask came falling off. Eyes glazing over, she became unable to hide her displeasure. The other two girls noticed and their expressions immediately paled, but the one talking didn't notice at all.

"Let us go immediately switch back the seats with Miss Krystel. It is alright, although we are weak, please let us also assist you. Please rest assured Miss Lilianne..."

"Silence."

It was in a small, and low voice. It was at a level just for the one person in front of her to be able to hear. The talking girl let out a short shriek, and halted her words. Incidentally, silence fell through the classroom as well. However, Lilia paid that absolutely zero mind, and released her words.

"I will say this once again but... From now on, I have no intention of involving myself with His Highness. I would bid you to not do anything unnecessary due to your own misguided interpretations. Or is it that, you actually wish to anger me?"

The three all vigorously shook their heads. They were shaking almost pitifully, but Lilia did not notice. Even if she did, she did not intend to stop.

"Well then please do close that noisy mouth. Is that alright?"

The three shook their heads up and down again and again. Seeing that, Lilia, with a 'very good', nodded satisfied.

—Scary. You're scary, Lilia.

—What is. I spoke with politeness right?

—Certainly your words *themselves* were! Those eyes are scary! Like I was feeling bloodthirst there!

—Isn't that just your imagination.

With a small sigh, she looked up. The three were still standing before Lilia. They had their heads hanging down apologetically, but it seems they didn't intend to leave. When Lilia frowned dubiously, the one who was talking until just earlier deeply lowered her head.

"Miss Lilianne. I am truly sorry."

"It's fine. Please be careful next time."

"Yes..."

After that she raised her head, finally leaving to head to her own seat. As Lilia was looking at her departing figure, Sakura's voice sounded in her head.

—Lilia. About those three. Well actually not just those three.

—What about it.

—Well, right. About those lot of followers. You should be careful.

Lilia frowns, as Sakura continues.

—Those people are ones who are after the ducal's power. It's no good becoming friends with them. No well, there are good people too. Make friends with the ones who will properly look at 'Lilia' rather than your status.

She was wondering what Sakura was trying to say all of a sudden, but it seems it was her trying to look out for Lilia. Lilia made a wry smile inside, and nodded that she understood.

—Just that honestly I don't have much confidence in seeing through people... Do you know of anything Sakura?

—Nn... My knowledge regarding the followers is also somewhat vague. It'd be better to rely on someone else.

—Rely on who then.

—The person above your room.

Lilia's face twitched slightly. She hadn't heard anything about that. Who, and for what reason they'd be there. As Lilia gulped down her saliva, as if it was no big deal at all, Sakura said,

—It seemed to be someone who was at your estate so, isn't it someone who your father or brother stuck there as a guard? They were really good at hiding their presence, so it's probably someone who can also do intelligence work.

—... Ahh, that so...

So it was her family's doing. Those two don't really have a need to keep it from Lilia, so why didn't they say anything about it? Pressing her temples and fighting back a headache, Lilia made another sigh.

—Got it. Let's make a request when we get back.

—Yep. There should be three people so it's probably fine if one of them shows themselves.

So there were three whole people. This time Lilia ended up truly holding her head in exasperation.

Just before the time for the morning assembly, the prince entered the classroom. And immediately after that the teacher came in. You'd think that they were arriving together, but the prince would always insist that it was just a coincidence. Though it was questionable whether such a coincidence would happen every day.

The prince's reason for arriving right before the morning assembly was simple, it was an anti-Lilia counter. If he comes earlier, then dealing with Lilia trying to talk to him would be troublesome, so it seems he's trying to avoid that. Lilia had felt a bit down about this when she heard it from Sakura. Since he kept to it today as well, it seems he hadn't really believed what Lilia said the other day.

The teacher stood before the podium, and started relaying some announcements. However, Lilia didn't listen to a single bit of it. Inside her head, Sakura's lectures that she deemed as time-killers continued. Today's Sakura's lecture was on something called 'science'. It was quite interesting to hear the

explanations of reasons for various things that were just thought of as ‘natural’ before. She realised with a start that the teacher’s speech had ended, and at some point, the lesson had begun.

—Ah, sorry. It’s class time huh. Well I’m gonna be quiet now, good luck with the lesson.

—Even though it was really getting into the good parts... Oh well.

Maybe she’d hear the continuation tonight? While feeling a bit reluctant, she turned her gaze to the teacher. The first lesson was arithmetic. Listening to the teacher’s explanation for a while, Lilia knit her eyebrows.

What’s with this, she thought. Even though there’ve been two weeks of lessons, they were still doing these problems? At the exceedingly boring explanations, Lilia sighed deep inside.

—Sakura. I’m not really confident that I’ll be able to stay awake.

—Nn... Shall we, continue?

Sakura probably had a similar feeling, as she didn’t disparage Lilia’s uttering. ‘So you get it,’ Lilia said as she formed a smile and gave a small nod.

For a while after, the teacher’s one-sided ramblings, the explanations continued. Occasionally someone would be called upon, but fortunately it never came to Lilia.

And so the next thing she knew, it was noon. Between lessons there would be a change in teachers, but Lilia didn’t notice a single thing. When the surroundings got noisy and she looked around with a start, everyone was heading to leave the classroom. From that and her depleted stomach, she guessed that it was now lunchtime. Just listening to Sakura, the whole morning ended up going by.

“Miss Lilianne! Perhaps we may go together!”

The three followers from this morning gathered around Lilia, inviting her. Lilia looked at them with suspicion, and shook her head. She said to the surprised trio,

“I’m sorry. I feel like being alone today. It’s a unfortunate, but I’m good so you three go on ahead.”

Saying that, the three came to an understanding with ‘that is so isn’t it’ and left the classroom. How and what they were understanding were unknown, but it was convenient to be able to be alone so this was fine.

—Sakura. I’m curious about one thing.

—Yup. What might that be?

—I... That is... I wonder if it would be a problem if I, went to *that* cafeteria...?

Schizophrenia – Chapter 24

For some reason, Sakura was quiet for a while. Just as she was about to give up on the idea, thinking that it would be bad to go by herself after all, Sakura's voice came.

—By 'that' cafeteria... You mean the one you went to last night, right...?

—What other one is there?

—Ah, yep. Umm... No problem, I think. Yup. Might not be a bad idea.

It seemed that Sakura wasn't against it. Lilia sighed in relief and got up. She headed for the cafeteria by herself.

—What's with this change of attitude?

—It's not like... It's just because the food yesterday was tasty, is that not enough?

—It's enough of a reason. Rather I think it's a good thing. Alright let's go quickly let's go!

Just as she was wondering if this was really that unexpected of a thing, it really was, when she thought about it. Lilia herself, if not for yesterday, would probably never set foot in such a place. It's just that she really couldn't forget the flavour of the cooking from yesterday. She wanted to at least completely finish a meal there.

—Ah, green peppers are no good! Make sure to ask for sans green peppers alright!

—I know I know. I'll ask them about it.

Lilia held no small amount of anticipation, as she headed for the cafeteria.

The cafeteria was very crowded. You could tell that even just from looking inside while passing by the front. And that was enough to have Lilia give up.

—Lilia. What about lunch?

—Isn't it way too crowded... I'm good for today...

—Dinner is free for students to decide, but everyone has to eat lunch at the same time after all. Of course it'd be like this. But, what now?

Lilia thought for a bit, and then she went into the room for nobles. There were already familiar faces of students who'd taken a seat, elegantly drinking black tea or whatnot. It was worlds apart from the room beside it. Lilia was also until just the other day coming here to have lunch, so she wasn't about to say anything to the ones eating here.

Though, she just couldn't bring up the will to eat here.

—Then it's take out time!

—Teik aut?

—Mu, so this doesn't get through huh... How about, you ask the person at the counter if it's fine to eat outside? They can probably make something like sandwiches right? Since they can make such good food.

‘I see’, Lilia nodded. She quickly headed to the counter in the back and called out to the person standing there. When she asked if it was possible to have them prepare sandwiches, the person, while completely surprised with widened eyes, immediately nodded with ‘yes of course’.

When she sat down in a nearby seat while she waited, she saw the three followers from before. It seemed that they hadn’t noticed Lilia yet, as they quietly continued to eat their meal. As she wondered if they weren’t going to talk at all as they ate, she remembered that when they were eating together with her, they also wouldn’t break the silence unless Lilia started a conversation.

“Thank you for waiting.”

Lilia looked up upon hearing the voice from behind the counter. A middle aged man who looked like a chef was looking at Lilia with a smile. In his hand was a small basket. When she received it, she could feel a bit of the warmth from inside.

“I’ve worked here for a long time, but this is the first time I’ve gotten an order for a sandwich from this side.”

The man’s face looked quite happy as he said that. Though thinking it a bit strange, Lilia said her thanks and left the cafeteria. Even just holding it in her hands, a pleasant smell tickled her nose.

—Lilia! Let’s hurry and eat!

—Yeah...

She glanced around. The entrance also had a great number of students. Though it wasn’t impossible, it would be hard to have a peaceful meal here. Thinking a bit, Lilia decided to move someplace else.

“I’m coming in.”

As Lilia said so and entered,

“Bufu! Geho...!”

Perhaps from the shock, Ray choked at the same time. He stared fixedly at Lilia in a dumbfounded state. In front of him was a small wooden lunchbox.

“You surprised me... Miss Lilia, what’s the matter?” he tilted his head as he inquired.

Without answering, Lilia put the basket in her hand onto the table. She headed for the stack of chairs to retrieve one for herself.

“Here you are.”

Before she knew it, Ray had taken a chair and placed it for her. Such quick movements, thought Lilia as she thanked him and sat down in that chair.

“I don’t really have any particular business. I was just looking for a place where I can eat my lunch peacefully, and came here. Since we’re both here, shall we have lunch together?”

“With myself? Yes, with pleasure.”

Ray seemed overjoyed as he showed a full faced smile. Seeing his carefree smile, the corners of Lilia's mouth also naturally lifted up.

After Lilia took out the white cloth from the basket, she put it to the side. Looking inside, it was packed full of sandwiches. Uu, Lilia unintentionally let out a groan and knit her eyebrows. Did they think that she was ordering for multiple people?

Lilia offered a simple prayer, then brought a sandwich to her mouth. Carefully tasting it,

—Ohh, delicious... What is this, Lilia eat more hurry hurry!

—Annoying...

It seemed that Sakura had really taken to the sandwiches, as she urged Lilia to keep eating.

Grinning wryly as she continued her meal, when Sakura started to hum out a tune in her cheer, a smile spilled out from Lilia. And then when she looked up, her eyes met with Ray who was staring at her with a blank expression.

“What?”

When Lilia asked, Ray flusteredly shook his head.

“No, well... I was just thinking how you really seemed to be enjoying your meal...”

“Sorry for being a bother,” said Ray as he went to lower his head.

When Lilia took a sandwich from the pile and offered it to him, Ray tilted his head, so Lilia said, “For you.”

“Eh, umm... Is it really alright...?”

“I wouldn't be able to finish all this just by myself. No need to hold back, so eat up.”

“Well then,” said as he Ray took it, and quickly brought it to his mouth. He opened his eyes wide, and a mutter of ‘it's delicious’ leaked out.

“There's plenty more where that came from, so please eat as you wish.”

Saying so, Lilia moved the basket to the center of the table. Ray also seemed to have stopped restraining himself and immediately reached out for his second one. Seeing Ray's smile as he continued to eat, it was somehow quite calming.

—Wow this kid's so calming, but more importantly these sandwiches are awesome! Lilia more!

—Yes yes... Then this one with the green peppers...

—Eh... I-if Lilia wants to eat it, I'll, bear, with, it...?

—I'm joking. Don't seriously cry alright...

As soon as she mentioned eating green peppers, Sakura's voice started trembling. Like with what happened yesterday, why did she hate them so much? She started becoming curious about Sakura's past from this really unusual point.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 25

With Ray's help, they somehow managed to finish all of the sandwiches. Reminding herself to let them know she was only ordering for one person tomorrow, Lilia looked at Ray. After finishing his meal and making some black tea for Lilia, he had opened up the books on the desk and was studying.

Incidentally the black tea was prepared from a table in a corner of the room. A small magic formation was drawn on it. Lilia hadn't known what kind of formation it was, but according to Sakura it seemed to be for emitting heat. To say nothing of bringing a lunchbox, it seemed that Ray really didn't intend to leave the room, and the library as a whole.

Lilia eyes went to Ray's reference book. She posed a question.

—Sakura. It should be fine, not going to afternoon lessons right?

—Nn? Well your grades are good so there shouldn't be any issues, what's up?

Without responding to Sakura's question, Lilia moved to Ray's side. With his eyes down at his books Ray didn't notice her until she leaned towards the study materials with a 'Well then'.

"Eh? Wawah!"

Ignoring Ray who flung himself backwards, Lilia peered at the contents. After reading a bit of it, she turned to face Ray.

"So? Which parts are giving you trouble? ...What's wrong?"

Lilia raised her eyebrows in confusion, seeing that Ray's face had turned beet red. When Lilia looked and faced him directly, he was producing nothing but vague 'ah' and 'uu' sounds as his eyes swam all over the place. *Just what in the world is going on*, wondered Lilia, tilting her head.

—Lilia. I'll ask just in case, but was this intentional?

—Ha? Was what intentional?

—Uwah this girl's a real airhead... Lilia, in the end you're still a girl, so you shouldn't just get so up close with a boy you know.

—What might you be implying by the 'in the end' part?

—Hiee! That part got a reaction! I'm sorry please forget it!

—Not happening. Let's go eat some green peppers later.

—Pleease-noot-thaat!

Finally seeming to recover, Ray returned to Lilia's side. However he seemed to wonder about something, as he examined Lilia's expression. Lilia just shrugged her shoulders and tapped her finger on the books.

"There isn't a problem even if I don't show up to the afternoon lessons. In fact it's so simple I'd only be bored there. That's why I'll just help with your studies here."

"Eh... But, well... I'd be happy to have that but... Is it really alright?"

“I’m saying it’s fine so it’s fine. Come on, the clock’s ticking. Let’s get started.”

As Lilia tapped the books with her finger again, Ray’s body trembled with a start, but he soon started smiling.

—Well, I guess some recreation is also important. If there’s anything you’ve forgotten then just speak up yeah? I’ll give you a refresher.

—I don’t think there should be anything, but if it comes to that I’ll be counting on you.

Reading the page Ray had opened, Lilia nodded.

As the time neared the end of afternoon lessons, Lilia closed the materials with a ‘let’s stop here for now’. The exhausted looking Ray let out a sigh of relief, but Lilia decided to overlook it.

—A total Spartan. A demon. It’s Spartillia.

—Green peppers.

—I’m sorry!

It’s like a magic word, thought Lilia as she bantered with Sakura, laughing in her mind. However if she went too far Sakura would likely get angry for real so it was probably best to keep it in moderation. Right now, Sakura was one of the few people who could be counted as Lilia’s ally, though it’s unclear whether you could even count her as an actual ‘person’.

“Thank you very much, Miss Lilia. Your teaching was very easy to understand.”

Ray said so as he lowered his head. Lilia simply responded with ‘that’s good then’ and nodded.

“Ray. If you don’t want to it’s fine to refuse but...”

“What is it?”

“You’re always here studying right?”

Ray nodded reservedly as usual to Lilia’s question. Lilia continued.

“If it’s alright with you, that is... Should I start coming here in the afternoons? I can definitely help teach you whatever is within my range of knowledge.”

Ray’s eyes went wide, and Sakura was rendered speechless. The extent of the two’s surprise was clear as day, making Lilia avert her eyes with a slight hint of sullenness.

“If me being here is a bit suffocating, then I won’t force you. This is also just a diversion for myself, so I thought I might as well just throw the suggestion out there. Please forget I said anything.”

Ending with that, Lilia started preparing to depart. That said, all that was needed was tidying up her own rubbish and putting it into the basket. As she finished that and was heading to the door,

“Miss Lilia!”

She was stopped by Ray. When she turned around, Ray lightly cleared his throat.

“Are you... Really okay with, doing that for me?”

Being asked so timidly for such, Lilia gave a small wry smile, nodding 'of course'. Seeing that a smile filled Ray's entire face as he lowered his head.

"Please take good care of me!"

"Yes. Well then I will see you tomorrow, I'll be coming at the same time as today."

Leaving those words, Lilia exited the room.

Perhaps due to having returned somewhat early, the presence of students could barely be seen in the dorm. After checking if any acquaintances, particularly the prince, were around, Lilia passed through the entrance and headed straight to her room. Only after finally reaching her own quarters, did Lilia let out a breath of relief.

—We were able to get back safely today as well...

—It's like you're a soldier returning home from battle huh. Though it might actually be a battlefield to you. Even if you're just constantly running away.

—Oh shut up...

When Lilia sat down on a chair, the bedroom door suddenly flew open. As Lilia's eyes widened in surprise, Alisa was standing there all out of breath. Even with her face being slightly pale, she vigorously gave a bow.

"Apologies for my tardiness...! Welcome back, Mistress Lilia."

"You don't really..."

have to mind it so much, was what Lilia was about to say, when her face turned to a frown. As she moved her sight towards the dimly lit bedroom, Alisa seemed frantic as she quickly shut the door. Is she even aware that doing such a thing is basically declaring that you're trying to hide something? Lilia wordlessly stood, walked to where Alisa was, and without giving the girl any time to try and stop her she opened the door to the bedroom.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 26

“.....”

It was the same old bedroom she saw this morning. The room was cleaned and the bed was made, but that was it. Just what was she trying to hide?

—Sakura. Perhaps...

—It's just like a Ninja! Awesome!

—Ninja? What's that?

—Uhm... they're spies from a faraway country in the east, or something like that, maybe?

How ambiguous, Lilia thought with a wry smile as she returned to the table and sank back into the chair. Tapping the table with her finger, Alisa quickly went to go prepare some black tea for her. Watching her as she worked, Lilia went, *well then*, as she opened her mouth.

“I don't know if it's by Father's or Elder Brother's orders but... Come out here.”

Alisa's movements stiffened. Forcing a stiff smile to her face she turned towards Lilia.

“Uhm, Miss Lilia? What might you be talking about...?”

At Alisa's words, Lilia's eyes narrowed in displeasure. Having that chilly glance directed at her, Alisa went let out a short shriek.

“Alisa. You are my maid.”

“Y-yes...”

“You belong to me. Are you trying to hide something from me?”

“That is... well...”

Alisa was unable to give a response and looked away, casting her eyes down. Her expression looked like it was about to break into tears. In actuality, Lilia didn't intend to condemn Alisa that much. The contract was with her Father, and for any orders from the Aldis house a subordinate could nary ignore such a thing.

That's why, there were others that she should be blaming.

—Sakura. Where are they?

—Nnnn... About here and in the middle of the bedroom. Hidden in the ceiling. Two of them. One in the bedroom.

How'd she know all this, Lilia was surprised inside, as she turned her eyes towards the places that were pointed out. Lilia couldn't see anything, but if Sakura was declaring so then they must be there.

“For the time being the two over there, come down. As for the one in the bedroom... well whatever. Afterwards, I, will go, have a chat, alone.”

Making sure she showed her smile, Lilia spun each word one after the other. *Kata*, and so came a light sound from the ceiling. How pathetic, to be rattled by something of this degree, thought Lilia as she tapped the table like she was urging them. At first slowly, and since they still did not come down she increased her pace.

“Goodness gracious... You got me.”

Where she felt she saw the ceiling sink inwards, it slid to the side, and two men descended. The two were dressed in black, one an old man, the other seeming to be in his middle ages. Coming before Lilia, they got on one knee and lowered their heads.

“This would be our first meeting, I think. I am...”

“Your name doesn’t matter.”

Lilia declared like a slap in the face. Having his words interrupted the old man frowned slightly, lifting his face.

“Get the one in the bedroom as well.”

“Nay, there should not be anyone more.”

“Do I need to repeat myself?”

She once again began to tap the table. Slowly at first, then gradually quickening. Though he probably didn’t know the exact meaning behind this the old man seemed to feel a chilling intent, and with a stiff smile, excused himself as he lowered his head.

“I will call them at once. ...Oi.”

At the old man’s severe voice, the other man nodded, and returned up into the ceiling. Lilia was a bit surprised at how he went back into the hole from before with a single leap, but she didn’t allow it to show on her face in the slightest.

After waiting a few seconds, the man descended from the ceiling again. And this time with him was one more, a girl, who should have been around the same age as Lilia. Her face was concealed with a mask so it was hard to tell for sure.

“Oh good.”

Lilia said so gently, and the three kneeling before her looked up.

“If it was a man in the bedroom, I might just have killed all three of you.”

She said such words with a smile, and the three deeply lowered their heads. These three probably knew, that Lilia wasn’t just saying so as an example, but conveyed reality. Most spies who wrought their master’s wrath would not live to tell the tale.

—Scary! Lilia’s scary! That’s no Lilia of mine!

—Who belongs to who now? More importantly this is everyone right?

—Nn... Yup. No doubt about it this is all of them.

—Is that so. Got it.

“Lift your faces.”

Lilia said so as she tapped the table with her finger. Without a word, the three silently lifted their faces.

“Under who’s orders were you sent here?”

The old man answered Lilia question. Master Claus, he said.

“I see. Elder brother was it. Hmmm...”

Lilia nodded, and sent her gaze towards Alisa. Alisa seemed to remember then, as she began to prepare the tea.

“And? Who is the one in charge here? Well, I more or less have an idea already though.”

When Lilia looked at the old man, he also returned her gaze, and gave a single nod.

“Well then I have something I want to ask you.”

“Anything my lady.”

“On who’s authority, did you order Alisa? Aside from yourselves, you were also giving orders to her no?”

Lilia’s tone lowered all at once. The two men, perhaps as would be expected did not stir in the slightest, but the young girl was shaking ever so slightly. She had yet to mature unlike the others, how lovely.

“Did you not hear me?”

When Lilia asked for the second time, the old man again lowered his head.

“Master Claus, said that it would be fine to make use of those serving the Aldis house.”

“I see. That’s quite the frank way of speaking, was that also how Elder Brother conveyed it?”

“It is as you surmise.”

“Really. In that case, I suppose I should offer my gratitude as well.”

Alisa put the cup of black tea on the table. Lilia took one sip, and then,

“...!”

She threw it just like that. The still hot tea splashed onto the old man, and his face made a slight grimace. However Lilia’s anger had yet to dissipate, and she forcefully struck the table with her fist. At the loud bang, the young girl’s trembling intensified.

“On, just, who’s, authority, did you order Alisa.”

Lilia slowly stood up. She had a sweet-looking smile on her face, yet her eyes alone were perfectly focused down on them.

“I’ll have you understand something.”

“Yes...”

“Alisa is my maid. Not a maid of Aldis, *my* maid. Towards this maid of mine, on just who’s authority did you order her with?”

“My deepest apologies.”

The old man further lowered his head, and the other two followed suit. Lilia stared at them emotionlessly for a while, but eventually she released her gaze, and sat back down into the chair.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 27

“Alisa. Sorry, but could I get you to make another cup?”

“Yes, certainly.”

Bowing respectfully, Alisa went to prepare some more tea. After seeing her off, Lilia once again returned her gaze to the trio.

In truth, Lilia herself knew of the fact that she was overdoing it. By all means, Sakura would probably be cautioning her as well at this point. However, this case was simply unforgivable. If they came here under her brother’s orders, then there was also a chance that they’d never gotten in touch with her father. In that case it wouldn’t be surprising for them to not know that Lilia had received Alisa as her own maid. Nonetheless, that didn’t matter a single bit to Lilia. If the ones who’s very job was to seek out information neglected to find out about such a thing, then it was no excuse to her.

—I-is it over? It’s over right?

—Yes. Come to think of it you were pretty silent.

—Yeah... Cause it was scary... I could tell that you were angry for real, so I kept quiet

—Ahh, I see. Sorry, that must have startled you.

She gave a gentle apology. Seeing that, Sakura seemed to convey a sense of surprise.

—Well, okay. I think it’s fine. It really shows just how much you value Alisa after all. It’s a good development, so I won’t say anything more.

—I see. Thanks.

—Though this was going a bit overboard.

—Right, yes... I’ll reflect on it.

Calming herself down, she slowly drew in a breath and let it out. In that interval, no one spoke a word. The space was dominated by a heavy silence. Lilia once again gazed at the three. The two men were able to receive her gaze, but the girl was clearly frightened as she averted her eyes.

The younger man noticed that, and sent her a sidelong glare. The girl was startled and her body once again began to tremble, as she apologised and hung her head on the spot.

—This is, from her being frightened by me? Did I do something?

—Anyone would be scared by that gaze of yours, have some self awareness.

—I haven’t really gotten angry at her yet though.

—Seeing your anger at all is more than enough!

I suppose that’s how it is, thought Lilia. Lilia made her best effort at putting on a smile, and looked to the girl. The girl’s trembling worsened.

—I didn’t think she was this scared of me.

—Yup. How about we give up on reconciling and just talk about their work or something?

—I suppose so.

Lilia let out a clear small sigh, and turned to the old man. The girl's face had become completely pale, but whatever. The younger man let out a disappointed sigh at the girl.

"I wonder if it is alright for me to give you guys work to do as well?"

Not expecting such a thing to come from Lilia's mouth, the old man's eyes widened. Though perhaps as expected of an agent he wiped the expression from his face in an instant.

"Master Claus had ordered us to provide aid to Mistress Lilia. Please order us as you wish."

"I see. Then I'll have you do some background checks on a few people."

"Background checks, is it. Of whom shall it be?"

"For now, do everyone in my class. Ahh, of course His Highness is an exception. Also, do one for a boy named Ray who often studies in the library."

Probably astonished at the number of people, this time it was the younger man who's face was tinged with a slight frown. Though as expected this one also quickly erased his reaction.

"That is a fair amount of people and thus would certainly require some time, if that is acceptable?"

"Yes. Let's have regularly... Let's see, come give a report once a day. This girl can do it."

The one Lilia pointed to with her finger was the girl who'd been frightened this entire time. The girl's expression became as if she had seen the end of the world, but Lilia wasn't going to try to change her opinion at this point.

"Are there any problems?"

"Nay, no problems at all. Your orders have been received."

She had intended to ask the girl, but it was the old man who replied. Lilia looked down with slight disappointment, then quickly shook her head. Coming back to herself, she continued.

"I'll be leaving it to you."

The three gave a firm nod, and returned into the hole in the ceiling. Seeing them off, Lilia gave a small sigh.

—By the way Sakura. Is there still anyone around? Or has everyone gone?

—Of course there's at least one person still remaining. They've got to have a guard for you around after all.

—It's fine even if they didn't. I've never heard of anyone getting attacked inside the academy.

—Lilia. There's more to it than just what's seen on the surface.

Lilia made a slight frown. The way Sakura spoke, it was as if something really had happened in the past.

—There are reckless ones out there as well you know.

Sakura gave a cheerful laugh.

“Mistress Lilia. A guest.”

After the three spies left, Lilia was studying in her bedroom when Alisa called out to her. Having an idea as to who the visitor was, Lilia smiled wryly as she rose from her chair. When she got to the door, as expected, there stood Tina.

“Good evening, Lilia. Wanna, go for some dinner? Ah, here.”

Lilia ended up reflexively receiving the small paper box Tina presented. Taking a look, there were a few baked sweets inside.

“Thanks for inviting me. What is this?”

“It’s dorayaki. You don’t know of it?”

“I’ve heard of it, but it’s the first time I’m seeing the actual thing...”

She grabbed one to give it a try. It still had a faint warmth. It seems it was freshly bought. Lilia timidly took a bite.

“...!”

—Delicious...!

—It’s dorayaki! I can’t believe they have them here as well! Maybe there are others too?

—Others? There are more things like this?

—There are! There are lots! Like taiyaki or daifuku!

Taking a not insignificant interest in it, Lilia looked at Tina. Tina was sporting a joyous, full faced smile.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 28

“I’m so glad you like it! I bought this from the shopping district to the south of the school.”

“The south side...”

In a certain sense, the school grounds could be split up by region. The north was connected to the area nobles resided in, and so much of the stores in the north side were geared towards catering to nobles. In contrast the south side was connected to where commoners and lower class nobles lived. Naturally, the shops there were more oriented for the masses.

While going to buy it only posed a problem of face and pride for the Aldis family, it was still a problem that couldn’t just be ignored.

“I can bring some more next time if you’d like.”

Though it was unclear if she had seen through Lilia’s internal conflict, Tina said such. Lilia slightly lowered the corners of her eyes, and gratefully accepted her offer.

Leaving the snacks she received to Alisa, Lilia left the room with Tina. She left telling Alisa she and the three agents could try the remaining dorayaki. There were five left, so there might still be one remaining when she got back. Actually she hoped they would leave the last one, and was regretting that she didn’t tell Alisa so.

—If you wanted to eat more you could have just said so.

—And just who was it that told me to tell Alisa to share it with everyone?

—It was me. Sorry.

It was to capture people’s hearts, was what Sakura said, but what kind of cheap heart would it be if it was swayed by some dorayaki? When she was thinking that,

“Lilia’s actually really kind huh. To tell you the truth I’d thought you were a much more scarier person...”

That sentence seemed to come with freakishly on point timing. There was no way she could admit that it was by the instructions of the evil spirit possessing her, so Lilia just gave a vague smile.

—Tina’s a really good girl after all. By the way Lilia, wasn’t there something pretty rude that slid out of your thoughts just now? Something about an evil spirit.

—Oh my. Aren’t you one?

—I’ve said it clearly haven’t I! I’m an Angel! A dear Angel! I’m the dear angel that’s here to help you!

—Isn’t it depressing to say that on your own?

—You’re really not holding back where it hurts huh! I-it’s not like that actually hurts or a-...

Sakura’s words stopped midway. As Lilia made a confused expression, Sakura went ‘uwah’, and said with a disgusted voice.

—Lilia. It’s the Prince.

—Hah...?

Lilia's face stiffened.

“What are you doing?”

And that voice was heard at the same time.

“Ah... Your Highness...”

Tina let out a dumbfounded voice. Towards the direction the voice came from, Lilia turned her around.

“My, your Highness. What might be the matter?”

“Don't play dumb. Just where are you thinking of dragging Tina to?”

The Prince drew closer to Lilia. Lilia made an annoyed seeming sigh, and fixed a smile to her face. That was,

“.....!”

The usual, smile.

“Your Highness. To say nothing of dragging around, did you know that Miss Tina is the one leading the way here? I am currently going with Miss Tina to head for some dinner together.”

“Hmph. As if I'd believe that. Aren't you just instructing her to walk out in front? So that if someone... If for example myself were to see you would have an excuse.”

—Uwah, what's with this guy. How annoying.

—I must currently wholeheartedly agree with you there.

Normally she would have openly cautioned her about such thoughts, but Lilia herself, seemed to have cooled down towards this man so she had no intention of finding fault with it. Together with Sakura, the two of them shared their feelings about what a troublesome guy this Prince was when,

“What's wrong, why aren't you saying anything? Cause I hit the bulls eye right?”

The Prince said with a triumphant smile on his face.

—So this is the so called doyagao! Doyaa!

—Doya... What?

—It's nothing. If I had to describe it, then it's basically the Prince's face right now.

—Ahh. So a face that makes you want to crush in your hands huh.

—Scary! That's way too much! But I agree!

While making some banter with Sakura as a form of escapism, Lilia breathed a small sigh. She looked away from the Prince and turned to Tina. The Prince, he probably hasn't even noticed Tina's expression that's been driven to the brink of tears.

As she tried to reassure her with a soft smile, Tina, though still with the corners of her eyes drooping, returned a smile in kind.

“Despite your kind invitation, since there’s been a boorish interruption let us call it off here.”

“Yes... Sorry about that, Miss Lilia.”

“No need for apologies. A certain boorish, intruding, someone from somewhere is to blame after all.”

Firmly punctuating her words, she eyes didn’t spare a single glance away from the Prince as she said so. The Prince’s face was turning seething red, but whatever.

“Well then, I will take my leave.”

She turned around on the spot. Before heading back towards her room, she moved just her lips to mouth a farewell.

See you later.

She wasn’t sure if it was properly conveyed, but Tina gave a firm nod in return.

The Prince shouted something or other in an attempt to stop Lilia, but she completely ignored such a thing. It didn’t even register in her mind. No matter what the idiot is shouting, it was all ignored, and she headed back towards her room.

When she got back, she was greeted by a wide-eyed Alisa.

“This is quite an early return... I’m surprised.”

As Alisa said so, Lilia just shrugged.

“We bumped into his Highness. It was troublesome so I returned.”

“Those words may be too much, Mistress Lilia.”

Even though she cautioned her, Alisa also had wry smile all the while. It seemed she wasn’t actually serious about it. Alisa probably had some of her own thoughts after seeing Lilia’s exchange with the Prince yesterday. Lilia simply accepted Alisa’s words, and shrugged her shoulders.

“It seems, we’ve missed out on dinner tonight...”

—Food...

Together with Sakura, she gave a heavy sigh. Since they were indeed quite looking forward to it, the shock was all the greater.

“Mistress Lilia. There is one dorayaki still remaining, how about it?”

“I’ll take it. After I eat that, I’m going to sleep.”

She was totally just going to sulk in the bed, but this time neither Alisa nor Sakura said anything about it. Receiving the dorayaki from Alisa, she went into her bedroom just like that, halfheartedly got changed and laid down on the bed.

Schizophrenia – Alisa1

I am Alisa Felis. I work as a maid in the Aldis dukedom. My career here started from when I was twelve years old. At that time my father felt it was still too early for me and was against it, but since I managed to get permission from my maid instructor, my mother, I apologised to my father in my heart as I knocked on the Duke of Aldis' doors.

For me, there were still things I needed to learn, so I certainly could have studied a bit more before coming here. However, as the place I wished to work at, the Aldis house wasn't always looking to hire more people. Especially since even regarding the current recruitment, there were conditions pertaining to age, and even magical expertise. Since I was fairly confident regarding magic, I felt couldn't let this opportunity slide.

I wanted to work in the Aldis dukedom no matter what. Rather, it was for that very purpose that I had made the decision to become a maid. And the reason is a simple one; I wanted help and repay in any way I could Mistress Lilianne who had once saved my life.

There were a number of examinations, but fortunately I managed to pass them without issue, and began work as a live-in maid of the Aldis house.

Naturally, I began with learning about all the work around the estate from my seniors here. Their guidance was certainly very strict, but at the same time I could feel the care they put in to teaching me.

One day, I asked one of my seniors what sort of people the members of the Aldis dukedom were. What I knew, was only of the kindness of Mistress Lilianne who had saved me, and the master of the house's gentle smile. My senior readily filled me in.

The master, Duke Kelvin, is the very picture of both a model knight and scholar, it seems. All while possessing first rate skill with the sword, his learnedness was also worthy of admiration. His wife Madam Asha was a leading figure in magic, and had invented many magical formations.

The eldest son Master Klaus was, similar to his father, someone who was proficient in both the pen and the sword. It seems he can give strict words to the workers like us, but all the more he is really most strict with himself. Facing failure with sincerity, in cases where he ends up reprimanding someone due to a misunderstanding, even if it was towards maids like us he would lower his head in apology.

The second son Master Theo is unlike the rest of his family, possessing a somewhat weaker constitution. Because of that he spends a lot of time indoors, and would always cling to his elder sister when he sees her. He seems to be quite attached to his sister.

And that sister, the eldest daughter, Mistress Lilianne. I had thought that she was a very kind person but...

"I'll tell you this for your own good. It's better to not get involved, with that person."

"Eh...? Why is that?"

"Willful, haughty, and selfish. A real tyrant of a person, whenever she opens her mouth it's never without a reprimand. Really..."

“What might you be talking about?”

A middle aged woman, the head maid who directs us sent the senior a scowl. The senior quickly lowered her head, and before I knew it she had gone and ended up escaping. I think that’s just going to make her angrier with you later on though...

“You’re Alisa, right?”

Called out by the head maid, I straightened right up.

“Yes!”

“Regarding Mistress Lilianne, I will not say anything. Look with your own eyes, and make your own judgement. Let’s see... Starting from tomorrow for one week, you will act alongside the person working as Mistress Lilianne’s personal maid. In doing so, you will likely come to understand what kind of person she is.”

The head maid said so, then turned around and left. Looking at her depart I,
—I can meet Mistress Lilianne!

My mood naturally elevated, I happily went about completing my remaining work. Even I felt I was quite the simple girl at that moment.

And so the next day came about. I came to understand the meaning behind the words of my senior. Mistress Lilianne, was a very tyrannical person. No matter what the matter was she would scold and reprimand without fail. Seeing that figure throughout the day, the image I had inside of me crumbled away in its entirety.

I was filled with disappointment. Certainly, I’d never actually exchanged any words with Mistress Lilianne before. However, as someone who had saved me, she was certain to be a kind person, I had always thought.

No, rather, I had *convinced* myself so. Even though my house was only of Baron status, we were still, no matter what, nobles. It was a matter of fact that stories about Mistress Lilianne would also be circulated our way. However, I never thought to believe in any of them.

However. Even so. The fact that my life was saved by Mistress Lilianne will not change. No matter what kind of person, I will do my utmost to serve them. As I decided so in my heart and continued my work, at some point instead of the Master’s I had been appointed as Mistress Lilianne’s personal maid. It seems that my senior had finally ended up quitting.

I accepted my appointment, and began working exclusively for Mistress Lilianne, but other than having the number of rebukes increasing not much else changed for me, and time flowed by in the blink of an eye.

That Mistress Lilianne, for just one day, had become quite strange. Constantly muttering something to herself, and occasionally as if recalling some matter she would shout out about something. Unable to do anything about it, I simply watched over her during all this.

The others decided it prudent to keep away from the strange Mistress on this day, so there was no one

around Mistress Lilianne except myself. From when she would occasionally give an order, I immediately noticed. This whole day, she had yet to get angry even once.

Even now she is muttering something by herself. I have no idea what I should make of this, but if at all possible I prayed that she could change in a good direction from here on.

But of course, by the very next day she had completely returned to her usual self.

From there time continued to flow by, and I had just about forgotten about Mistress Lilianne's eccentricities that day. Then Mistress Lilianne who had been living in the dorms suddenly returned home to the estate. It was all quite sudden so I hadn't had a chance to make any of the preparations, but Mistress Lilianne simply shut herself inside her own room and didn't come out again.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 29

The next day and the day after that weren't very eventful. Waking up early and finishing breakfast in her room, then going to class. In the mornings the three followers would start talking to her so she would halfheartedly go with the flow. After the lessons ended she would go to dining hall to get some sandwiches, before heading to eat with Ray in his room at the library. There she helped him study, and after that went over to the noble-use dining hall to get have a meal before shutting herself in her room. That was what continued for two days.

Of course during those two days, after dinner she would meet the girl agent. It seems that working on a person each day, they had been properly looking into her request. Firstly was two of her followers, and she was able to find out about the names and relations in their families.

—Seems it's better to not be involved with those two huh.

—Yep. But suddenly ignoring them completely isn't good. I think it would be fine to just casually go along with their conversations.

—Indeed.

It wasn't like their families had shady dealings or anything. It's just, they really should've had nothing to do with her. She probably hasn't even ever met them before at the occasional evening party. They were probably just drawn in by the Aldis name and tried to get in on the opportunities. It really was pretty pointless. She wasn't even engaged to the Prince anymore.

—I think it'd be better for them to be sucking up to Tina at this point.

—Their noble's pride probably wouldn't allow for that. How idiotic.

—Lilia. There's a mirror right there so I think you should try take a look in it.

—What do you mean...

Other than that there wasn't anything else that really stood out about her days. Tina didn't come visit either. She probably thought that if she invited her when the Prince was looking it'd probably cause trouble for Lilia. Well it couldn't be helped that she thought that at this point, so Lilia decided to also lay low for a while.

And so the weekend arrived. This academy had two days off during the weekend. Officially the first day was supposed to be for 'self-study', but just how many people would actually take that seriously and study?

—Well I think there should be quite a few. Ray seems like he'd definitely be studying, and Tina probably is as well.

—Right.

—Ah, of course that includes Lilia too. As expected of Lilia! So hurry up and solve that problem! Too slow!

—Just give me a bit more...

She really got strict when it came to studying. But she never gave truly unreasonable demands, so Lilia could only tacitly work hard at her studies. She was currently working to solve one of the problems Sakura had prepared.

As lunch came by, she ate the sandwiches she had sent Alisa to retrieve, as she continued to study. No breaks. She didn't feel the need. Simply concentrating on the problems in front of her.

After finally finishing the problems, she was listening to comments on them when there was a knock on the door.

"Mistress Lilia. An invitation has arrived."

"An invitation? For what?"

Heading to the door, she took the envelope from Alisa. She opened up the tightly sealed envelope and read the contents. It was for an evening party tonight.

The grounds of this academy were vast. Once or twice every month, on the weekend they would use a corner of this place to hold an evening party. The organisers could be the royal family or the academy itself, depending on the event. And so based on the organiser, different people would be invited. Putting it bluntly, if it were the royals holding it then high class nobles would be invited, and if it were the academy organising then everyone including the commoners would get an invitation.

Lilia was of a Duke House, so she was certain to get invitations to all of the evening parties. It may have been a regular happening, but from how hectic the last three weeks have been she'd completely forgotten all about it.

"Mistress Lilia. How shall we respond?"

Lilia skimmed through the invitation, and confirmed the organiser. It was the royal family. Since the prince would obviously be there, the old Lilia would have definitely not missed the event. But the prince probably didn't even wish for Lilia's attendance here. Just as she thought about using a feigned illness to excuse herself,

—Lilia, wait!

Hearing Sakura's voice, she closed her mouth.

—What?

—This evening party, if it's not raining would be held outdoors right?

—That's right.

—And people are free to come and go right?

—That's right.

—There will also be less visible places there right?

—That's right.

—If you leave a bit early, will you be able to change outfits there?

—That is doable.

Just what did she want to say? Hurry up and get to your conclusion already. Just as Lilia was starting to get irritated,

—Then, wanna go sneak into the south side?

Lilia gulped at that proposal. She lowered her eyes, and thoroughly gave it some thought. The reason she couldn't head to the south side, was that her face was well known around these parts, and her status would cause issues. If she could hide her identity, then wouldn't it work out?

—Sakura.

—What is it what is it!

—Your idea, I'm in.

As expected of Lilia, Sakura laughed happily. Lilia made a small nod, and then turned to Alisa.

I'll go. Can I leave the preparations to you?

With the current situation and all Alisa probably didn't expect such an answer, as her eyes widened and she was speechless for a moment. However she quickly recovered, and gave a respectful bow.

“Certainly.”

And so Alisa left the room, and Lilia returned to her desk. Just as she was about to start thinking about the things to come,

—Sakura. What are we going to do for the disguise?

—Ah-...

Yes. Even if they wanted to use a disguise, they didn't actually have one on hand. The only clothes in Lilia's room were uniforms, or flashy dresses. Even if they were to go buy something now, Lilia currently could only go to the north side stores. And there was no way they would be selling clothes she could use as a disguise.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 30

—Sakura...

—Wait wait! I definitely have an idea. It just came to me!

—How haphazard... What's your plan?

—Friends are real handy to have, bro! Let's go see Tina!

I see, thought Lilia as she got the gist of it. In this country, the rank of Baron was unequivocally close to that of a commoner. Tina should have any number of clothes that could blend in with the common people. Just, there was still a problem.

—I've got to go myself don't I.

—Well yeah. You need the disguise, and I don't think you could ask Alisa to do this for you or something. No, I suppose Alisa would actually help you out here, but I'm certain it would cause her all sorts of worry.

If Lilia straight up ordered her she would probably abide by it, but she didn't really want to subject Alisa to that. While being her maid, she was also one of Lilia's few allies here. She wanted to treat her well. When she realised she was actually thinking such things, it surprised her a little.

—I suppose it can't be helped... I feel like I'm going to create more rumors around here, but let us go.

—Do your best~.

—Must be nice to be so carefree.

Lilia confirmed the time stated on the invitation, and made a small click of her tongue. The evening party was set for tonight. It would have been great if there was a bit more notice, but it was probably planned by that idiot prince after all. Speaking of him, it wouldn't be strange if just as an excuse to invite Tina he'd rushed out a last minute plan to hold an evening party here.

However, since there actually weren't any other evening parties scheduled this one should have to have been planned in advance. It was probably so that Tina wouldn't have a chance to refuse, that the notification came right before the event.

Either way, Lilia had nothing to do with the situation around that. There really wasn't much time left, so she had to hurry with her preparations.

"Alisa. I'll be heading out for a bit."

Informing Alisa who had hurriedly begun on her work, Lilia left her room behind.

Lilia descended to the second floor, and as she passed through the entrance-way the lively hall quieted down all at once. Looking around, the students who'd been having friendly conversations had all stiffened as they noticed Lilia. Well, this should've been expected as high ranking nobles didn't usually set foot on this floor.

—Even for someone of ducal class this is pretty overboard. For now let's just go to Tina's room.

—Right... They probably have an idea of who I am.

—I'm sure anyone would know. You're pretty famous. All because of a certain idiot prince.

—A real good for nothing idiot prince.

While verbally abusing the former target of her affection together with Sakura, for now she headed to the table beside her. There sat three male students, and when they noticed Lilia coming in towards them all three faces instantly paled. Even though she hadn't even done anything yet... Lilia felt a bit displeased, as she asked them a question.

"I'm looking for Tina Breyer's room, might you know where it is?"

The three looked at each other, and hesitantly gave a serious nod. Very well, nodded Lilia as she continued.

"Then please lead me there. Right now."

"Well, I don't mind, but... What are you going there for?"

"Does that have anything to do with you?"

When Lilia slightly narrowed her eyes, the shivers were sent through the three's bodies. Just as she was starting to feel that she wasn't going to get anywhere with these three,

"If I may interrupt?"

She was called out to from behind. Turning around, the owner of the voice came into sight. With short chestnut coloured hair and a strong-willed set of red pupils giving off quite the impression, there was a girl who was probably in the same year as Lilia. And in a rare occurrence she was glaring straight at Lilia. That was sort of fresh for her, and Lilia unintentionally gave a bit of a smile.

"What?"

When the girl opened her mouth, Lilia kept the smile on her face as she shook her head.

"No. It is nothing. So is there something you need from me?"

"That's right. That girl, What do you want with Tina? Depending on your answer I might just hit you."

"Heeh... Hit? You? At me? Heeh..."

Slowly, her smile deepened. The girl's face stiffened and she took a step back, but her eyes that firmly kept her glare on Lilia only got stronger. While slightly surprised at the girl, Lilia examined her reaction.

"I, won't just yield to some noble! We will protect Tina! Get lost!"

I see, Lilia nodded in her mind. It seems that it's become a complete misunderstanding. Taking into account all that had happened up until now it probably couldn't be helped, so she didn't feel angry.

—To stare down Lilia for the sake of her friend, what a gallant girl! Lilia, you let's get her for some of her nails. Let's boil them and drink it.(1)

—If I drank that would you become a bit less objectionable?

—Eh? I totally didn't expect that kind of comeback... Eh, huh? The kind of image you have of me is like...

Ignoring the Sakura that started getting all distressed for some reason, she met the gaze of the girl. Right as she was thinking about how to bluff her way past this,

——Eh? You're going to bluff it? Why not just say it as it is? It's not like you're up to anything bad.

I see, Lilia nodded. Certainly this time she just wanted to ask Tina for some help. There wasn't anything shady.

"I think you may be misunderstanding something here, but I just have a favour I wanted to ask of Tina so I'm paying her a visit. Is there some sort of problem?"

"Hah? As if I could believe something like that! Hurry up and get out of here already!"

She started to raise her voice as she said that, but it wasn't like she had resorted to violence. As long as she'd been going to this academy, she would definitely know the significance of raising a hand against a noble, what's more someone from a Ducal. When Lilia continued to stare at the girl without moving, the girl's expression got steadily more grim.

"If it's gonna be like that... Then even I have my ways..."

"Just, just stop it already, Aira."

"Shut up Kayten!"

Behind the girl came another girl. She had long blue hair and was grasping onto Aira's sleeve. It was a hair colour that was rare even in this country so it had remained in her memory from sometime before. But of course, it wasn't to the extent of actually remembering her first or last name or anything. The girl with the chestnut coloured hair named Aira renewed her glare towards Lilia. Just as she was beginning to think this was just a waste of time,

"Aira, what's wrong?"

Once more, a third person came to chime in. However this time she was well acquainted with this voice here.

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“Tina! Don’t come! Please get back to your room!”

Aira shouted, but the footsteps paid no mind as they drew closer.

“I said don’t come here!”

As Aira shouted that, from her side Tina showed her face. And, with an ‘ah’, Tina raised a delighted voice.

“Lilia! What’s brought you to a place like this?”

At her friendly voice, Aira and Kayten’s eyes went wide. Not just that, all the people around them had their mouths stupidly hanging open. At the surrounding reactions Tina tilted her head.

“Huh? What’s wrong? Aira and Kayten too, what with the weird faces?”

“Nah, uh, well...”

Aira’s gaze went towards Lilia. Lilia sent the now bewildered Aira a smile, and spoke to Tina.

“Tina. Might you have a bit of time? I just have a small favour to ask of you if that’s alright.”

“Favour? From Lilia!? Of course it’s alright! Let’s head to my... Ah, I gotta go clean up so wait just a bit! I’ll be right back!”

Say that she hurriedly ran off. Left behind in a daze were Aira and Kayten and the others, as Lilia simply watched them with slight amusement. Aira who was looking at Lilia awkwardly averted her gaze and,

“Well... Sorry.”

“It is fine. I forgive you. Now then, could you please lead me there?”

“Yeah... This way.”

Nodding meekly, Aira started walking. Kayten followed after her, and Lilia went along behind them.

In the second floor hallways, the rooms were lined up with much less space between each door. Just from that you could tell the sizes of the rooms. To say that they were about the same as just the bedroom provided to Lilia was probably a generous estimate. She had heard about it before, but it seems that they really did live in pretty small rooms here.

—Rather it’s more like Lilia’s room is way too big. Way bigger than where I was living.

—Heeh... What kind of room did you live in?

—A one room suite. But it had a proper bath and everything! Cool right!

—Right. Though my room has one too.

—Like you rich people would understand! I’m super not jealous or anything!

Even though she was saying that, Sakura was muttering quietly about how she'd love to try that bath and whatnot, but maybe it would be nicer to just pretend she didn't hear that? While she was thinking of such things, Aira stopped in front of one of the doors.

"Here."

Saying so she knocked on the door.

"Tina. For now I've brought her here but..."

"Just, just wait one more second!"

The clattering of something being cleaned up could be heard. As Lilia was thinking how unexpected it was for things to be that messy in there, Kayten gave a wry smile,

"Please don't come to any misunderstandings now. It may be messy but it's all things related to studying, so I think she's just cleaning that up."

"Heeh. She's quite passionate. I'm impressed."

It seems Tina really was here studying. It was as she had imagined, but for some reason she felt a bit happy about it. Aira and Kayten were staring at such a Lilia like she was some rare creature, but Lilia noticed not one bit.

After a bit of waiting, the door finally opened. Smiling awkwardly as she showed her face, Tina gave a bit of a forced laugh.

"Sorry about that, thanks for waiting. Come in. Ah, as for Aira and Kayten... Umm..."

"I don't really mind. And they seem worried anyways."

At Lilia's words, Aira and Kayten seemed to feel awkward as they averted their eyes. She was almost starting to feel displeased at just how much they seemed to doubt her, but it probably goes to show just how much they worried about Tina. Tina really was blessed with good friends.

When compared to Lilia's, Tina's room really was pretty small. The opposite wall had a window, the left side had a bed, and the right a study desk. Beside the desk was also a bookshelf stocked with learning materials. That was it, and the space between the bed and desk was just wide enough for no more than a single person to pass through.

"It sure is narrow..."

Lilia murmured, and Tina gave a wry smile as she said,

"Lilia's room is really big after all. I think I'm actually a bit jealous. It would be great to have even one more room's worth of space, but it's clear there wouldn't be enough rooms that way..."

"Though if only a certain bunch of nobles would take up a bit less space this could all be solved."

Aira's thorny words startled Kayten as she protested with her eyes, and Tina was unable to say anything as she looked to Lilia's face with a complicated expression. Lilia,

"So about the favour I wish to ask."

Pretended to not hear a thing and began the conversation.

—You’ve really grown, Lilia. I’m kinda hap-

—I wonder how I’ll have her dealt with later on...

—Not grown at all! You’ve just stopped saying it out loud! You can’t Lilia, she’s Tina’s friend so you can’t go and crush her alright!

—So basically if she wasn’t a friend then it would be fine right.

—It’s not fine! That’s too extreme!

—To not be satisfied no matter what, you sure are a selfish one...

—Me!? I’m the bad one!?

Ugahh! Screamed Sakura. Lilia drove that voice out of her consciousness, and once again faced Tina.

“Like I said earlier, it sure is something to have you ask for a favour... If it’s within my power I’ll do what I can to help?”

“Thank you. But it’s not anything that difficult. It’d be a quick request for you.”

Wondering what it might be Tina tilted her head. Lilia glanced at the cabinet on the bookshelf as she said,

“Could you perhaps lend me a set of clothes?”

Tina’s eyes widened in surprise, and Aira and Kayten were both speechless. After a bit Tina came to her senses first, and reservedly spoke.

“Uhhh... The clothes I have aren’t really like the ones you usually wear... I mean, they’re like, for commoners, mostly the clothes those kinds of people use you know?”

“I do not mind. Or rather, I should say that I had wanted to borrow just such types of clothing. Also if you could, having a hat to wear would make things even better.”

Just what would she need them for, wondered Tina as she headed for the cabinet. Just a moment, she said as she started rummaging through the cabinet.

“Uh hey, Miss Lilia.”

It was Aira’s voice. When Lilia turned around, a meek looking Aira continued to speak.

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“Just maybe, are you...”

Did she have a sharp intuition, or was Tina just a bit too dense? It seemed like she was hesitating over whether it would be okay for her to say it, as Aira glanced back and forth between Tina and Lilia. Kayten probably also guessed what was up, as the corners of her mouth were raised slightly.

“I’d like to keep this as confidential as possible. ...And Tina hasn’t seem to have realised yet either.”

“Ah, yeah. Got it. I promise. I won’t tell Tina either.”

Aira nodded firmly, and Lilia also gave a satisfied nod. Then,

“How about this!”

Tina had brought out a set of clothes. Spreading them out, it was a pure white one-piece dress. There were no decorations or anything, and it looked quite simple.

“The white here is perfect for Lilia!”

—Buhah! White! Perfect for Lilia! You’re being totally misunderstood here!

—The way you say it pisses me off, but I have to agree. Isn’t she idealising me a bit too much here?

—It seems the Lilia inside Tina’s mind has become an extremely good person. Better work hard so you don’t disappoint.

—I’ll put in an effort but...

Just when did her evaluation become something like this, thought Lilia as she sighed and reached out to take the clothes when,

“Hold up.”

Aira stepped in to grab it from the side.

“Aira?”

“What are you doing?”

Tina had a blank look as she tilted her head, and Lilia narrowed her eyes. *Your eyes are scary*, said Aira with a wry smile as she continued,

“Miss Lilia. Are you just gonna take this with you and leave? I think those nobles will certainly have a reaction if they saw that.”

“Ahh... You’re right. And so? Since you mentioned it do you have some sort of good idea?”

Her tone almost seemed provocative, but she was actually just curious. Aira seemed to get that too, as she nodded with an earnest expression.

“I have a wooden box that’s just the right size for this, so I’ll put it in and take it to your room. I’d just caused a disturbance earlier, so at most people would think I’m bringin’ something over to make amends yeah?”

I see, said Lilia as she nodded. Certainly it wouldn’t seem too out of place that way. In fact normally in such situations a servant would be sent over for the task, but Aira who was either a lower class noble or commoner would probably go to visit personally.

“Sounds good. In that case could I get you to take care of that, Miss Aira?”

“Sure thing. Just leave it to me.”

Aira nodded, and left the room with the clothes. Kayten also gave a firm bow and followed after her. Tina and Lilia saw them off, then,

“What good friends.”

“Eheheh. They’re too good for someone like me.”

She seemed overjoyed at having her friends praised, as she beamed a full-faced smile.

“Well then I’ll be returning to my room. Tina, I’ll definitely repay this favour.”

“It’s fine even if you don’t. Rather, let’s go to dinner again sometime, alright?”

Tina said with a carefree smile. Lilia’s eyes widened for just a moment, as she quietly nodded,

“Yes.”

—Tina sure is pure. She too good for someone like you.

—Yes, truly.

—Hey, you’re not supposed to be agreeing there. She’s a good friend for the new and improved Lilia. I mean it alright?

While conversing with Sakura in her bedroom, Lilia was being changed into the dress Alisa had prepared. That said it wasn’t actually that flashy, and was something that gave off more of a muted impression. It was also easy enough to change in and out of that could probably take it off herself too. *Something that wouldn’t pose a problem even if it were stolen*, was what Lilia had asked Alisa to prepare, so among the things Lilia wore it relatively cheap. Compared to regular things it was still very much a high-class item though.

Something that wouldn’t be a problem even if stolen, when told that Alisa had looked at Lilia with a doubtful expression, but she didn’t really pry too much and just went along with it. Though, it seems she’d consulted with the agents about this, so they would probably attach a guard to watch over her. As long as they didn’t get in the way that was fine too.

—It seems she’s here.

At Sakura’s voice, Lilia looked up. There was a knock on the door to the bedroom, and Alisa’s voice came through. A guest, apparently.

“Could you please show her into this room?”

At Lilia’s reply, Alisa’s voice paused. You could feel her speechlessness, before she responded *understood*, as she returned to normal. And before waiting long, there was another knock on the door.

“Please enter.”

“Pardon the intrusion...”

And then entered Aira. She was holding largish wooden box, and looking like she was doing something super shady. Lilia quickly realised she was being very careful with the contents of the box.

“Even if you break of drop anything I wouldn’t really mind you know?”

“Nah, well I’d mind... I would mind.”

“It’s fine to speak like you were before too. Even if you get all polite now it just feels weird.”

“Ugu... I got it.”

Aira lowered her shoulders, and went towards Lilia with the box. Lilia pointed at a place on the floor, and she let it down there.

“Say, Miss Lilia.”

“What is it?”

“It seems pretty obvious... But are you planning on goin’ to the south side?”

As if she still couldn’t believe it, she doubtfully asked that question. Lilia firmly nodded.

“Yes, that’s right. Is there some problem?”

“Nah, it ain’t a problem. It’s a side of the academy so the public order’s probably fine. Just, it seems so out of place... What are you trying to accomplish there?”

“Dorayaki.”

“Eh... Hah?”

She probably couldn’t believe what she had just heard, as Aira’s eyes went wide. Finding that state somewhat amusing, a bit of a smile floated onto Lilia’s face.

“The other day, I received some dorayaki from Tina. It was really good, I thought I’d go buy some more. Also I’ve heard that there were many other things too, so I plan to have a look around.”

“I see... I knew Tina’d gone and brought some dorayaki with her somewhere the other day, but to think it was for you. You guys’re really friends huh. So you harassing her was just some rumours then.”

“Oh my, it’s true though? It’s just that we’ve since reconciled after that.”

Aira’s mouth dropped open with a thud. Some stifled laughter was leaking out of Lilia, as she went and got up.

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“Well then I must prepare for the evening party.”

“Ah, ahh... Well, take care then... Ah, right. Got some paper and a pen?”

Lilia had an inquisitive look on her face, as she took out what she'd been using to study with Sakura from her desk. *Such high class stuff*, shuddered Aira as she received it, but was it really that amazing? As Lilia was looking over Aira wondering what she needed it for, it seemed the girl was scribbling something on the sheet.

So after she wordlessly handed it over and Lilia took a look, it turned out to actually be a map. A route running from the Academy to a number of stores was marked out. When Lilia looked at Aira with a questioning gaze, Aira's cheeks reddened and she turned away.

“It's the stores we usually go to. If you take that route you can visit them all in order. Sneaking out of the evening party won't leave you with much time yeah? I'd recommend those for your first time.”

“My... Thank you. I'll gratefully make use of it.”

Lilia carefully scrutinised the map, and carefully folded it up.

“Ahh, also. Don't go to any other stores. Just let me know if anything else catches your interest. I'll give ya my recommendations. 'Cause there's lot's of bad ones out there.”

Said Aira as she gave a wry smile. To go this far for her, Lilia actually started to suspect there was something to it.

“You're treating me awfully well here... What's your objective?”

When asked that, Aira asked *Is that how it is?* And seemed somewhat surprised. She began thinking about how to explain as she put her hand to her chin. After a little bit, she finally shook her head.

“Can't really put it into words that well. Though, if it's an objective then I do have one.”

“What might that be? If it's something befitting the value of what you've given me, I'll certainly provide.”

“Haha. Then there wouldn't really be anything I could ask for.”

For Lilia the information was in it's own way quite valuable, but it seemed that Aira didn't feel the same way. She didn't intend to correct her either way, as she waited for Aira's demands.

“Well it's not anything that hard really. Just want you to keep getting along with Tina. That's all.”

“That's... Of course I intend to do so. Is there nothing regarding yourself?”

“Not really. Well, let's see... Best regards from here on out, I guess?”

Aira said that and smiled, saying *see ya* as she left the room with a wave. Seen out by Alisa who was standing by at the door during this, their presences retreated away from her bedroom. Lilia slowly let out a breath, and sank deep into her chair.

—To be thinking about Tina before even herself... I cannot understand it.

—It's cause they're best friends, I guess. How nice, I sure am jealous~. Ah, but I think of you as a best friend too.

—Stop it, that's gross.

—How cruel!

Sakura started going on at length about just how much she'd been thinking about Lilia all this time, but she completely ignored that. As she spread out and gazed at the map she received from Aira the corners of Lilia's mouth were already slightly raised, but Lilia herself didn't notice that all the way to the end.

Evening came, and the time was drawing near so Lilia left her room. Following behind her was Alisa carrying the wooden box. Lilia had intended to leave alone, but she was stopped by Alisa who pointed out that it would be strange for her to be carrying such luggage by herself.

“During Mistress Lilia's excursion, I shall properly watch over the belongings.”

Alisa said so with a bright smile, so it seemed her plans were completely seen through. She probably didn't try to stop her, because she already knew that Lilia wouldn't have changed her mind. Lilia felt a bit regretful; if she didn't have to deal with convincing her then she should have just explained everything to Alisa from the start.

—But isn't it fine? Even if you don't go all out of your way next time, you can just get Alisa to help.

—She'll definitely be quite worried though.

—Well, the agents will probably be going with you so it should be fine.

Even though there hadn't been any indications Sakura sounded pretty certain, she felt a bit of discomfort, lightly looking around in disbelief.

—Are they... Somewhere around here?

—Yup. But don't let your guard down. Seems it's just one person, so if you're attacked by a group there's not much they could do.

—Right... I'll be careful.

Pretending to not know about her follower, she brought herself to the party location.

They seemed to have made all the preparations at some point, as there were tables arranged around the schoolyard, and an assortment of food was being brought out. A few who had gotten here even earlier than Lilia, were gathered together chatting amongst themselves. At the entrance to the schoolyard was a table and two men. When the two men recognised Lilia, they bowed respectfully.

“Welcome, Mistress Lilianne.”

Lilia handed the invitation to one of them. He politely received it, but without actually confirming the contents they invited her to enter.

“I'd just like to ask, but are we free to come and go as we please here?”

“Indeed. What might be the matter?”

“If I find that I’ve forgotten something, I’ll be going back to retrieve it. I shall return by the end, so please don’t mind me.”

“Understood.”

The two men sent her off with a bow, as Lilia left the entrance behind. And entering the nearby school building, she attempted to open the door to one of the classrooms. However naturally there were locked up.

“Mistress Lilia. Please excuse me.”

It was a different voice from Alisa’s. And, surprised at the voice that was higher pitched than Alisa’s or her own she turned around. There was a girl dressed in all black. the girl took a key out from her bosom, and used it to unlock the door.

“Where did you get that?”

“Father entrusted me with it. You’ll probably be using it, he said.”

“I see…”

Lilia’s face twitched slightly, and Alisa who was watching over this expressed a wry smile.

—Seems your actions were completely seen through. In fact the secret plan isn’t really secret or anything else at this point huh.

—Just what was all my worrying for…

—It was useless. There was no point. Sure was dumb!

—Was it not you who had made those suggestions?

—That’s no good Lilia. You can’t be caught in the past! Look to the future! The snacks are calling for us~!

Her voice was quite cheerful, but it was plainly obvious she was now trying to avoid that earlier topic. Good grief, Lilia shook her head, and since it was none other than herself who had taken up Sakura’s suggestions she decided to say no more.

She quickly changed her outfit in the classroom. the two other girls both let out cheers.

“It really suits you, Mistress Lilia!”

“It’s lovely!”

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“I see.”

Said Lilia as she nodded, but she didn't really feel so within. It only felt kind of plain to her. She felt a bit down thinking about having to walk around outside in the dress.

“Do I properly look like a commoner?”

When Lilia asked that, Alisa and the agent girl both averted their eyes.

“Eh?”

When Lilia stiffened, Alisa said in a fluster,

“It, it's alright! It's, not really like a commoner, but you do look like a rich lady going out incognito!”

“That's right! At the very least you don't seem like a duke's daughter anymore!”

Should she really be reassured, or happy with that? Lilia couldn't think of an answer, and could only give off a vague smile.

“Mistress Lilia. Please take this as well.”

She was handed a straw hat. It was in the box with the dress. When she put it on, the two girls watching on both nodded with satisfaction.

“Does it fit?”

“Yes. No problems.”

“You will be guarded no matter what happens so please rest assured.”

Would she really be protected by this girl? Lilia looked at her a little doubtfully. The girl probably noticed, as she quickly shook her head.

“If something were to happen I would not be able to handle it myself. After leaving the academy, Father shall be covertly following behind.”

“I see. It's fine even if we walked together though.”

—Eh? Is that really fine? Lilia, just imagine it. Some well bred young lady walking together with some old dude dressed up in all black.

—Calling him ‘some old dude’, really you...

Though she was admonishing her speech, Lilia did try imagining. Quickly, she came to the conclusion that it was no good, and shook her head.

“Sorry. Let me revise that. I want to walk alone.”

“Understood. I shall return then”

While smiling wryly, the girl gave a bow and left the classroom. As she was watching her depart, she suddenly remembered.

“Now that I think about it, with that girl, and the other two as well, I still haven’t asked for their names huh.”

“It seems so. Shall I inform you their names now?”

“No, it’s fine. I’ll ask them myself when I get the chance.”

Leaving that aside she needed to get a move on or she’ll be late in returning. As Lilia walked out the door, Alisa silently saw her out with a bow.

There were soldiers constantly stationed at the gates of the academy. Normally one would go through various procedures to pass through the gate. She was anticipating just how she might talk her way past, or perhaps get them to let her through discreetly, but,

“Have a safe trip.”

They just let her though without saying much at all.

—What’s with that?

—Yep. Make sure you thank those agent people after. It seems they’d talked to them about it beforehand.

At those words, Lilia’s eyes widened. She hadn’t heard anything about this...

—There was that thing you did to them the other day, so they were probably desperately trying to not earn your ire.

—I didn’t really intend to get that mad at them though.

—Nah you were plenty scary back there alright?

So it was like that, thought Lilia as she left the school grounds. Right outside the south end of the academy was a wide road running parallel across the exit to either side, as well as an even bigger street that ran straight south from there. With either of the roads, there were all sorts of stores lined up along them. Lilia took out the paper she received from Aira and started walking down the indicated route. However she quickly came to a stop.

—Sakura. Do you, understand this map?

—Yep. I can read it but... Ahh, I see. Only the basic points have been marked out here. I’ll guide you along.

Following Sakura’s instructions, Lilia set out into the south side town.

—You see, a hundred years ago there was a great sage in this country. The great sage taught many things to the country, but the of all things it seems what he’d put the most effort into was food. There wasn’t a single thing he enjoyed eating here, so he tried super hard to fix that. What a wonderful person! By the way Lilia, you’re not listening are you. Ah, make a right there.

—I’m listening. I just don’t have as much of an attachment to food as most nobles.

Following Sakura's directions, Lilia walked down onto a busy street by herself. The various people coming and going turned to look at her as they went by, but it was the same even in the academy so she paid it no mind. And so, she didn't even really think about why she was garnering all this attention either.

As soon as Sakura began guiding Lilia along she had started to lecture about this country's history. That said, it was mostly history related to food. She certainly had the desire to eat delicious things, but she wasn't as caught up in such a thing as Sakura. She had no interest in something like the great sage who brought about some revolution in food.

Sakura should be aware of that as well, but even so she continued to talk. She even periodically confirmed if she was listening properly.

—Hey, don't you find it odd, Lilia?

—About what.

—The method to make salt isn't even known here, but it somehow became a common everyday item.

Lilia's feet came to a stop.

There were various seasonings gathered in this country. Of course salt and sugar were among them. And they, with a magic formation and the spirits' help, were created from raw materials while completely omitting the actual process of their creation.

Normally without knowing the actual process of making something you wouldn't be able to create such a magic. Therefore, it seemed that there was someone who indeed knew the full process for creating them, and yet the only known way of producing them currently was using magic formations. It seemed like something quite obvious, but only after it was pointed out did she notice the strangeness of it.

—Right? It really is strange.

At Sakura who gave a cheerful laugh, Lilia felt a slight chill. The way she spoke made it seem like she actually knew all about the creation processes mentioned. The way to create them without relying on a magic formation.

—Sakura. Could it be that you, were that great sage or something?

She asked with a tiny bit of conviction, but Sakura immediately denied it.

—However, I do think that Mr. Sage guy was someone who resembles me quite a bit. Though I don't know if he'd also possessed someone like I did, eh? Ah, Lilia that store there! It's strawberry daifuku buy some buy some hey buy some!

—Just when I thought we were having a serious conversation... Please put a bit more effort into staying on track...

Voicing her complaints all the while, Lilia headed towards the store Sakura pointed out. The treats called 'daifuku' were lined up on the counter, and the one called a strawberry daifuku was in the middle of them, lined up so that they stood out prominently. Buy just one, she put it in her mouth on the spot.

—I see... So the strawberry itself was inside the thing...

—A strawberry daifuku! It tastes like a strawberry daifuku too!

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Sakura was enraptured by the tastes of the strawberry daifuku. Just where did all that seriousness from earlier go? Making a helpless smile, Lilia bought one more and headed for the next shop.

After that they just continued with some pointless chatter as they went around to the shops marked out on Aira's map. Along the way, they ran into many stores and foods that piqued their interest, but with only one exception they ignored them all. The exception being the strawberry daifuku of course.

And so after circling the entire route and while shopping at their last destination,

"Milady. Perhaps it is about time."

It was a man's voice. She recognised it even without having to turn around, as it was one of the agents. Thinking about it, that girl agent had referred to this guy as 'father', so were they parent and child? She was a bit curious, but it wasn't something she needed to pry into so she left the question unasked.

"I got it. I'll head back after I buy this."

A small paper box was being wrapped up in front of her. Receiving it from the store clerk, she cracked a slight smile as she headed back towards the academy that was now within her sights.

As she reached the gate, the guard took a glance at her before silently making way. Lilia also didn't say anything, and quietly went through. The agent had disappeared at some point. And as she returned to the classroom she used to change, there waited Alisa in the in the same fashion as when she departed.

"Welcome back, Mistress Lilia."

Alisa politely lowered her head. Lilia returned a nod, and put the paper box on a desk.

"Could I get you to bring this back to my room? I'm going to go show my face at the evening party for a bit."

"Yes, certainly."

"Ahh, by the way one piece in there is for you, so feel free to go ahead and eat it if you'd like."

Alisa returned a look of astonishment as she widened her eyes. With a bit of trembling in her voice,

"Is that really alright...?"

"I did just say so didn't I?"

"Thank you very much!"

Alisa gave an energetic bow. Lilia was a bit perplexed, but simply got her to help change outfits before getting her to return to the room.

When she got back to the evening party, the man at the entrance slightly widened his eyes.

"Welcome back, Mistress Lilianne. Well, I am sorry to say but..."

"It shall be over soon yes? I do not mind. I'll just be going to greet some people."

"Please excuse me. Well then, right this way."

Passing by the man, she entered the venue. Different from when she had left, the place was filled with people. Even now the tables were still lined with numerous dishes.

—Lilia. Not gonna eat?

—I don't think I can eat any more after that...

—Well, I guess that's true.

Her stomach was already filled with the various treats she ate as she was touring the streets. She wasn't bursting at the seams per se, but there was no reason to force herself here.

She felt some gazes and looked around her. She met eyes with numerous people who were looking this way, but they all quickly averted their gaze. While feeling a bit displeased, in order to get her business over with she searched for the person she needed. A sort of gathering of people was being created with said person at the center so it wasn't too hard.

She headed over and began to walk. The surroundings that noticed Lilia fell silent, and opened up a path for her. It was the usual scene. Within that crowd Tina was there as well.

—Eh?

Letting out an exclamation inwardly in tune with Sakura, she turned just her sight to look towards the rightward area. Indeed, it was Tina. Dressed in an extravagant gown, Tina looked very much ill at ease here.

—This must be that idiot prince's doing eh.

—Really... How worthless...

Give a bit of thought to Tina's situation! Lilia could now see the trials this thoughtless Prince puts her through. Tina did certainly come from a house of barons, but that wasn't at the status to be invited to an event put on by the royals. Surrounded by essentially nothing but upper class nobles, just what kind of mental state was she in by being in the middle of all this? The Prince might just think that she would decline if she didn't want to go, but there was no way the baron class Tina could turn down an invitation from a prince.

So he can't even comprehend such a simple thing, Lilia felt some slight disappointment, as she came before the one she was looking for, The Prince.

“Lilianne. What did you come for.”

With those being the first words out of his mouth, Lilia couldn't help but make a bit of a frown. The surroundings also let out voices in confusion. Lilia quickly stuck a smile on her face,

“My, after sending over an invitation, those words are a bit much.”

Even a sneer was still within the definition of being a ‘smile’.

“It's not like I invited you because I wanted to. They were just persistent in not leaving out anyone from a duke's house from the invitations.”

“And it's not like I wanted to come either you see. But it wouldn't do to not answer to an invitation from the royal family no? Even though I didn't even want to have to see you in my field of vision.”

The Prince's eyebrows shot up. Taking in a breath and getting ready shout,

"Might you please try to think about people's situation a bit more, Your Highness?"

"I don't want to hear that coming from you!"

The Prince shouted. The surrounding atmosphere tensed up like a spring, but to Lilia it was no concern of hers.

—Well, hey, the place being what it is, you should probably think about your own situation a bit. It'll cause trouble for your family.

—That's... You're right, I'll be careful.

Somehow calming her heart that had begun to race, Lilia affixed a glare at The Prince. *So you're still not gonna stop doing that though huh*, said Sakura with a wry laugh, but she really couldn't fix that.

"That is so. Without thinking of the place I have said too much myself. My deepest apologies."

Saying so she lowered her head. Voices of surprise leaked out from the surroundings. That was probably natural seeing the Lilia who rarely lowered her head obediently bowing here.

"Hmph. As long as you understand."

"Yes. I shall apologise. And with that, I beseech you once more. Please think a bit about the situation."

Wha-, The Prince was rendered speechless, and then his face was dyed red in anger. Without apologising this time, Lilia took a glance behind her, then quickly returned her gaze to The Prince.

"Your Highness. Why is it that Tina of Baron status is present here?"

"Is that not obvious? Because I invited her."

"Why?"

"That has nothing to do with you!"

—An idiot. We have an idiot here.

—Let's stop that, Sakura. Isn't that rude?

—To who?

—To idiots.

Exchanging some lighthearted banter with Sakura, she felt refreshed and made a smile. Thanks to Sakura, she got by without losing her temper.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 36

“Your Highness. Just what are you thinking here?”

“About what?”

“The recipients of the invitations are mostly those of the upper nobility. Within all that, Tina alone is the exception here. Might you have any idea, just what that girl might be feeling because of that?”

“What do you mean. What’s wrong with inviting her because I wanted her to come?”

—Ah, this guy’s hopeless. He’s not even trying to understand. Lilia, let’s give up here.

—You’re right. I feel bad for Tina, but this is out of my hands.

Sighing together with Sakura, she turned her back to The Prince. Now that she knew there was no point in any further conversation, she had no more reason to be here. She’d already fulfilled her obligation to show up, so she decided to head back to her room. As she felt an unpleasantness that made her good mood from touring the town earlier seem like a lie, Lilia wordlessly started walking away.

“Wait, Lilianne! Our conversation’s not over!”

She stopped at The Prince’s words and answered without turning around.

“No, it has concluded. Now that I have realised the pointlessness of any further exchange of words with you, there is no longer any reason for me to be here.”

After this she left without saying anything more. The Prince was shouting something or other from behind her, but she completely ignored it.

There was no one who impeded her path of return. Anyone who saw Lilia’s face all scattered like away like a flock of birds. But when she neared the exit there was one person standing there who didn’t flee.

“Mistress Lilia...”

Tina was looking at her with a worried expression. Probably because there were other upper class nobles around, she seemed to be holding back from being too familiar with her words. Lilia gave just one glance at Tina, before passing her by.

“Hang in there.”

“...!”

Tina widened her eyes at the short parting Lilia sent before leaving. Without turning back to see her reaction, Lilia quickly took her leave from the place.

When she got back to her room, Alisa had prepared some tea and was waiting for her. Slightly surprised, she was guided to her seat by Alisa. Taking a sip of tea, she felt a bit of life returning to her.

“Good work out there, Mistress Lilia.”

Just how much does this girl know in saying that? While thinking it strange, Lilia simply gave a small shrug and didn’t respond.

“Might there be any plans for tomorrow?”

“Not really... No, there is actually. But there isn’t anything requiring your assistance, so it’s fine if you guys have a rest. At least take a break on the weekends.”

Hearing that, Alisa had a troubled look. It seemed like she was going to say something, so Lilia spoke first.

“You can take this as an order.”

“Uu...”

“Take a break tomorrow.”

Alisa looked like she still wanted to say something, but soon gave up with a sigh. However that was just giving up, and didn’t mean she had accepted it. Alisa seemed like she was thinking for a while, before eventually opening her mouth.

“We shall take a break during noon only. Will that be acceptable?”

“...Suit yourself then...”

She was wondering just why she was so opposed to taking a day off, but it didn’t seem like Alisa would budge any further than this so she gave her consent with this.

—Lilia, what are you actually doing for tomorrow?

—Not much. Just going to make a few arrangements.

—For Tina’s sake?

—I suppose that’s what it comes down to.

When she answered, she was a bit surprised at her own words. To be acting for the sake of someone else... But, Lilia quickly shook her head. This was just the thanks for lending her the dress. It’s for my own sake, or so Lilia convinced herself.

—It’s a good thing, so there’s no need to deceive yourself you know?

Sakura said so with a cheerful laugh.

The next day. Finishing her breakfast, she saw out Alisa who went to buy things in town, and spent the rest of the morning working on her studies with Sakura. Making do with the snacks she bought yesterday as her lunch, Lilia left her room as well when afternoon rolled in.

When she got to the second floor entrance, the hall once again fell silent. But perhaps lacking in the shock factor compared to yesterday, the people quickly averted their gazes, and bit by bit returned to their own conversations. Even so there were still some who froze just from seeing her, but Lilia paid it no mind and moved her feet.

She arrived at Tina’s room. When she knocked, there came Tina’s voice from the door.

“Yes?”

“Tina. It’s me.”

“Lilia? I’ll be right there.”

Following right after that voice, the door was opened. The face Tina revealed seemed just a bit worn out.

“Welcome, Lilia. What’s up?”

“Well, not much... May I come in?”

“Yeah, of course.”

Tina led her into the room. On her desk, study materials and notebooks were strewn about. So she was diligently studying, for some reason Lilia felt a bit happy at that.

—You’re just like an older sister huh.

—Hah? Older sister?

—Oh it’s nothing.

She didn’t think it was really ‘nothing’ from the way Sakura was happily giggling to herself, but she could tell that Sakura had no intention of answering her so asking would be useless anyways.

“Tina. How were things last night after that?”

When she was asked that, Tina gave a tired smile.

“There wasn’t anything up until I left but...”

Tina turned her gaze to a corner of her desk. There were numerous scrunched up pieces of paper there. With a doubtful frown, Lilia picked them up and read their contents. And instantly, she had her eyes narrowed.

—Lilia, that’s scary. Though I get how you feel.

—What in the world, is with this...

There were six pieces of paper. On each of them words such as ‘You’re not fit for The Prince’, or ‘Don’t get ahead of yourself’ and so on were lined up on the pages, seeming so far off the mark to someone who actually knew about Tina that they could only be shocked.

—It’s a mass produced Lilia model.

—I have no idea what you’re talking about but the fact that you’re making fun of me is clear.

—Then, it’s that. The mass produced former-Lilia model

—You sure have some guts there...

Schizophrenia – Chapter 37

Even having said that, Lilia understood what Sakura was getting at. Not long ago, it would be easy to imagine Lilia writing a similar note. But now, Lilia could freely admit that her past actions were deplorable.

—If you can think like that, you're okay, Lilia.

—I'm glad if that's the case.

For the moment, Lilia decided to read through the notes. But when she saw the last one, Lilia froze.

“Lilia? What's wrong?”

Seeing Tina innocently tilting her head, Lilia responded with a vague smile. She took only the last note, and returned the others to where she found them.

“Tina, don't throw these away. I realise keeping them around is unpleasant, though.”

“Huh? Um, sure. That's fine...”

Tina seemed reluctant, but these might be useful later. Lilia couldn't afford to throw them away.

“You're taking that, Lilia?”

“Yes...I'm just borrowing it for a while. I might not return it, though. Is that okay?”

“I don't mind...but what are you going to do with it?”

Tina asked that question nervously. Right now, Lilia and Tina were able to have a normal conversation. However, in the past, Lilia had done some frightening things. And that same Lilia was about to take that note, teeming with malicious intent, with her. Lilia's actions were full of nothing but bad implications. And Lilia had no intention of hiding it.

“I recognise the handwriting, so I'm going to pay a visit to the person who wrote it.”

Those words seemed to confirm Tina's suspicions, and her face clouded over into a complex expression. Tina didn't seem to be sure whether she should be happy that Lilia was taking action for her sake, or whether she should be scared about what she was going to do.

“Um, Lilia. You don't have to worry so much about me...so, don't do anything cruel, okay?”

“I understand. I'll respect your will. I'm only going to give them a warning.”

Lilia looked straight at Tina, and said that with a smile. Tina breathed a sigh of relief, and thanked her with her own weak smile.

“I'll be going, then. Oh yes, about the clothes...is it okay if I borrow them for a while longer?”

“Sure. Ah, right. If you're happy with those clothes, you can have them. My father told me to tell you that.”

Lilia wondered when she could have met with her father. She was a bit surprised, but decided to happily accept Tina's good will. Tina aside, her father might be hiding some other intentions behind

those words. But not even having met him before, she decided not to worry about it too much. If something did come of it, however, she wouldn't be holding back.

—You've got no mercy, huh...

Pushing Sakura's strained laughter out of her mind, Lilia gently waved goodbye to Tina, and left the room.

As soon as she closed the door,

"Miss Lilia."

Someone called out to her, so she stopped. When she turned around, she saw Aira and Kayten.

"How...how is Tina doing?..."

Hearing that, Lilia frowned a little. *Why don't you check yourself*, she wanted to say, but for the moment, she answered honestly.

"She's fine. She was the same as usual."

"I-Is that right? That's a relief..."

"Of course, she's clearly pushing herself."

When she added that, Aira and Kayten's happy expressions froze over. They became rather disheartened.

"What can we do?...We don't have the power to do anything..."

"If our noble titles were just a little higher...maybe we would be able to support her..."

"Despite your concern, you didn't even set foot into her room, huh."

Were these two really that useless, Lilia thought to herself. When Lilia rebuked them with some disappointment, Aira scowled at her.

"I spoke with Tina countless times today. But from what I could see, she didn't seem any different. Somehow, though, I knew she was pushing herself..."

It seemed like Aira was trying to be useful to Tina. Lilia felt somewhat relieved. If that was her intention, then all was well. Lilia nodded in affirmation. When she looked Kayten's way, she was staring right back at her.

"Isn't there something you can do, Mistress Lilia?"

"Well, now..."

She averted her gaze from those two, and looked toward the door of Tina's room. She couldn't hear a thing through the door. *Tina...what are you thinking right now?*

"I have a favour to ask of you two."

When they heard that, both of their eyes opened wide. Their surprise that Lilia would request something of them irritated her just a little, but there was no point in getting into an argument over it, so she didn't say anything. She looked at both of them sternly and spoke.

"From now on, when Tina goes out, please go with her. Even just doing that will make all the difference."

"Huh...? Just by doing that?"

"Yes. It's a lot easier to harass somebody when they're on their own."

—You *are* the expert, Lilia.

—Quiet, you.

"Also, take this."

Lilia brought out a large piece of paper with a complicated magical formation drawn on it. She folded it twice and held it out to Aira. She looked clearly confused, but took it and looked back to Lilia for an explanation.

"By borrowing the power of the wind spirits, this magic formation will carry your voice to anybody. The target of this spell is me, so if there's ever any trouble, contact me anytime."

"I-Is that really alright?"

"Yes. However, your message will only be delivered to me. I won't be able to respond. So don't waste it on something trite."

Lilia warned them, just in case. If Aira used it outside of emergencies, it would be a real problem. Aira and Kayten nodded firmly in understanding.

"It's about time I got going. Oh yes, before I forget, Miss Aira, thank you for the map. I'll be counting on you again in the future."

"Ah, I'm glad it came in handy. If you're fine with those stores, feel free to ask me more anytime."

Lilia nodded, and started heading back.

After getting back, Lilia headed into her bedroom. She sunk into her chair and started planning her next move.

—As I thought, you're not settling for just a warning, are you?

—Obviously. Not after seeing her face.

Tina was admirably putting on a facade of calmness. In fact, back then it seemed like she'd already calmed down. However, Lilia saw it. Her eyes were swollen red. Tina had been crying her eyes out. Just the thought of it had Lilia simmering with rage.

Schizophrenia – Alisa 2

After Mistress Lilianne had shut herself inside her room, I learned that His Highness had broken off his engagement with her.

Everybody in the estate, not just me, was shocked by the news. In front of His Highness, Mistress Lilianne had put on a show of being sweet and gentle. It seemed that she was trying to win his favour. By no means did it seem that His Highness bared any ill will toward Mistress Lilianne. So, to suddenly break off their engagement...

I was worried about what would happen next, but in the week after that incident, Mistress Lilianne did not set foot outside her room. Even still, I didn't know when she might come out or when she might call for me, so I remained on constant standby outside her door.

I also harboured a genuine concern for the Mistress's wellbeing. For Mistress Lilianne, who always behaved with such reckless abandon, to have shut herself in her room for such a long time...

Today, I also waited outside without expecting to be called on, but then the door suddenly opened.

"Ah..."

"You, standing around outside of someone's room like that, what might I ask are you doing...?"

Mistress Lilianne, who had left her room for the first time in a week, looked to be in quite a bad mood. Hearing her icy voice filled me with both a sense of relief that my Mistress had returned, and an inevitable anxiety about the sharp reprimands sure to follow. Not being able to look at her directly, my eyes wandered, and Mistress Lilianne sighed deeply.

Being yelled at was a common occurrence, but I could count on one hand the number of times I'd been sighed at. When I heard it, my mind went blank. I started wondering whether I had disappointed her in some way, and...

"Umm... I am terribly sorry, Mistress."

...I offered that and awaited Mistress Lilianne's words. Would I be met with scorn? Or would she yell at me? Or, perhaps...

"Don't mind it. I just got a little worked up. Sorry about that."

Those were...words of forgiveness. There was no mistaking it—my actions had been forgiven. Unable to believe what I'd heard, I quickly brought my face up to look her in the eyes. Mistress Lilianne, on the receiving end of my gaze, took a step back.

She walks and talks like Mistress Lilianne, but...

"Mistress!"

"Wha, what is it?"

"Are you feeling unwell?! Did you eat something strange?! Please wait here, rest assured I'll go and bring the doctor immediately! So, please, let us quickly return to your room!"

This absolutely won't do. I must put Mistress Lilianne back to bed and retrieve the doctor at once! The worry must have driven her mad! Don't worry, Mistress Lilianne, I'll return with the doctor immediately!

"Hold up. What are you talking about?"

I tried to get Mistress Lilianne to somehow agree to go back to bed, but she repeatedly insisted that she was fine. In the end, I was overruled. My worry did not disappear, but I yielded to my Mistress's will. As long as I was watching over her, I could quickly rush to her side if something happened.

After that, Mistress Lilianne tried to take off somewhere, but I couldn't overlook it anymore, so I called out to stop her. The reason was simple. She...stunk a little bit. Of course, it couldn't be helped. She hadn't come out of her room for a week.

And so, I awaited Mistress Lilianne's response.

"If you knew all along then tell me sooner!"

I was suddenly yelled at. Perhaps I should have said something sooner. I lowered my head and apologised for making her angry. Having failed her again, I started shaking in fear imagining what Mistress Lilianne would do to me. However, Mistress Lilianne's words went against my expectations.

"That's not it. Those words weren't actually directed at you. So, don't be so scared, okay..."

Those were such kind words. I was the only other person in sight. I think, seeing me shaking in fear, she must have been trying to calm me down.

After that, my Mistress asked me whether she smelled. It was difficult to respond honestly to such a direct question... Saying, *yes, you stink* would be far too disrespectful. However, lying also wasn't an option. It would not do to have her face the inevitable humiliation were she to face others like this. Resigning myself, I nodded.

"Sorry, but could you prepare the bath for me?"

Again, I was caught off-guard by my Mistress Lilianne's words. My Mistress was actually making a **request** to a maid like myself. Normally, without a doubt, she would have **commanded** me to.

And then, Mistress Lilianne asked me what my name was. It was unfortunate, but it seemed she had forgotten about me. After I responded, she then asked me about my age as well. Just to be clear, I had already answered both of these questions during our first meeting.

"I shall make you into my personal maid. Alright?"

I was so surprised, I ended up not saying anything. Right now, I was already working as Mistress Lilianne's personal maid. I was sad that she had forgotten me entirely, but at the same time, happy that Mistress Lilianne herself wanted to establish me as her personal maid. That happiness overpowered the sadness I felt at being forgotten, and being so overwhelmed by that emotion, I couldn't say a word.

Like that, Mistress Lilianne went for a bath while I remained dumbfounded.

After she had finished her bath, Mistress Lilianne declared that she was going to the garden. Honestly, the way Mistress Lilianne had been acting lately was very strange. Whether she's changing for the better or not, it was still incredibly strange. Leaving her alone like this wasn't a good idea, so I requested that I go along with her.

It seems that Mistress Lilia has taken an interest in the maid's flowerbeds. On our way there, one thing was constantly on my mind. That is, my flowerbed wasn't something that I could show her.

My job involves catering to all of Mistress Lilia's needs. This means that if I make even a small mistake, a merciless reprimanding will quickly follow. Because of that, I must take a great deal of care in everything I do. And so, I'm slower at getting my work done than the other maids. The senior maids know why I work slowly, and so they told me not to worry. However, that doesn't excuse me for being slower.

And so, my primary duties end up taking so much time that I have no time left to take care of my flowerbed. In the end, I never touched the flowerbed, but my seniors have been taking care of it in my place, making sure that weeds don't sprout. Hence, there were no blooming flowers in my flowerbed. You wouldn't know what to say when you saw it.

"Alisa. Where is your flowerbed?"

"My flowerbed, you say? It's much too boring. It's better if you don't..."

"Never mind that, just take me there already."

"Uuu...As you wish..."

My desperate plea was quickly overturned. In resignation, I led Mistress Lilianne to my empty flowerbed. When she saw it, she was dumbfounded. Her eyes narrowed and she looked at me in displeasure. That gaze inspired a great deal of fear within me, so I quickly averted my eyes.

And then, the Mistress asked for an explanation as to why my flowerbed was in this state. I answered her without a single lie. Of course, I didn't straight out say that, because of my job looking after Mistress Lilianne, I had no time left over for anything else.

"Well then, do you have any intention of planting something?"

"No...I can't say that I do..."

"Is that so."

Mistress Lilianne sunk into silence, seemingly turning something over in her mind. The wave of silence brought along with it a great sense of unease, but I couldn't say anything, so I simply awaited her next words.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 38

Lilia had only been friends with her for a short time, but it was clear that Tina was a kind and honest girl. Even though Lilia had treated her so badly, Tina still wanted to be friends with her. Taking that into consideration, you can imagine just how much of a good-natured person she is. Some might call it a weakness, but Lilia couldn't criticise her for it.

However, it wasn't as if Tina was particularly strong-willed. Most likely, she was actually quite sensitive. She didn't have any proof, but, it seemed that Tina was afraid of being hated by people. Because of that fear, even just the thoughtless words written on those scraps of paper were enough to drive her to the point of tears.

Lilia was angry at the people who wrote those things, but her anger was also directed toward the prince. *What does he think he's doing?* If he was going to throw Lilia away like that, she wanted to see him treating Tina properly. Yet despite that, he's not looking after her at all. He should have been able to fathom something like this would befall Tina. Or perhaps, he was more of an idiot than Lilia thought.

—This is truly...unforgivable...

Lilia heaved a heavy sigh.

—I'm the only one that's allowed to bully that girl.

—Don't taint everything you said before by saying that!

Sakura's voice echoed in her head. Lilia knit her brows, hiding a small smile.

—Is there something wrong with what I said?

—Yes! Nevermind. Anyway, what are you planning on doing?

When Sakura asked that, Lilia closed her eyes in silence and thought for a bit. And then she spoke.

—First of all, I'm going to destroy that person.

—Scaaary...Well, that's exactly what makes you Lilia, though.

Sakura laughed cheerfully. Inside her head, both Lilia and Sakura's incredibly cheerful laughter echoed throughout.

The Next Day. Lilia spent her morning just as usual, and went to class just as usual. A group of students were talking casually amongst themselves. When they noticed Lilia, someone muttered something under their breath, and their stifled laughter reached her ears. It might have been about last night's party, but Lilia decided it wasn't worth worrying about.

Lilia looked around the classroom, but it didn't seem that the person she was looking for was here. A little discouraged, she gave up and took her seat.

Lilia waited for a while, and her three followers entered the classroom. When they saw Lilia, they dropped their bags off at their seats and came to her side. She found the entire thing bothersome, but greeted the three girls nonetheless.

"Our deepest apologies for coming in late, Mistress Lilia!"

“It wasn’t like I was waiting for you, so don’t worry about it. More importantly, you...”

Lilia cast her gaze directly at the girl standing in the middle of the three girls. Seeing her face, Lilia was easily able to recall who she was. Sera Valdia. The daughter of an earl. Before she had come to the academy, the girl had absolutely nothing to do with Lilia. Even then, Lilia had merely met her at an evening party or some such ordeal.

Lilia placed the note that she took from Tina on top of her desk. The handwriting was meticulously crafted, but here and there, some telltale quirks remained. These were the same quirks Sera’s handwriting had. When Sera saw the note, she tilted her head in confusion.

“Umm...Mistress Lillianne, why do you have...”

It seemed she had no intention of hiding it. Even so, Lilia asked her, just to make sure.

“This note. You wrote it, did you not?”

“Yes. I wrote it, and snuck it into that girl’s bag. Could it be that she thought you were the one who wrote it, Mistress Lillianne? What an audacious girl, immediately accusing Mistress Lillianne...”

“Stop talking.”

Lilia unconsciously spoke in a harsher tone than she intended. Sera stopped talking completely, and her face went pale. In the time since, Lilia’s surroundings had also fallen into complete silence.

“It wasn’t as if she accused me of doing it. After what happened at the evening party, I went over to Miss Tina’s room to check if someone had done something foolish.”

“Eh...?”

Likely not expecting to hear that, Sera’s eyes hung open wide in surprise. Lilia could surmise why Sera was so surprised. The upper-class nobility stepping foot on the second floor was completely unheard of. All of the upper-class nobility looked down on the lower-class nobility, and so, they wouldn’t step foot into their sphere of life. Lilia had expressly gone to the second floor to visit Tina, and so that surprise was natural.

Lilia placed her finger on the table and tapped the note. It made only a small sound, but Sera was shaking in fear from it.

“I would have thought that where I go had nothing to do with you. Am I wrong?”

“No...it is exactly as you say. My deepest apologies.”

Sera meekly lowered her head. Lilia turned her nose up in derision, and tapped the note again.

“Yes...?”

“What, might I ask, is the meaning of this?”

In addition to the note Sera had written, there were also other, similar notes. *You’re not worthy of being by His Highness’s side, remember your place, don’t abuse Mistress Lillianne’s kindness*, etc. Lilia

couldn't help but be surprised when even her own name was mentioned when she was reading through the notes.

"It's...It is exactly as the notes say."

"Which is?"

"It's unforgivable for that girl to be at His Highness's side!"

Sera declared this with a loud shout. In response, Lilia raised her eyebrow. *Go on*, Lilia urged by tapping the note once more.

"Mistress Lilia should be the one at His Highness's side! To have that stolen by *that* girl is unforgivable! The one who should stand at His Highness's side is Mistress Lilianne!"

I see, Lilia nodded. It seems that, in Sera's mind, she had done all of this for Lilia's sake.

Lilia felt sick to her stomach.

Lilia desperately bit down on her anger, and slowly lifted her gaze upward. When she levelled a glare at Sera, she suddenly let out a short shriek.

"I understand what you're trying to say."

And then, Lilia's lips curved into a smile. Seeing that, Sera breathed a sigh of relief, and smiled herself.

"As long as Mistress Lilianne understands, that is the most important thing. This was all for Mistress Lilianne's..."

"Sera. Get out of my sight immediately."

Sera's expression froze over. Lilia sighed and stood up. She glared at all three girls in turn, and all of their faces turned pale. It wasn't only these three — everyone in the classroom was shaking terribly. Even Kris, who was in the center of the room, wore a stiff expression.

—Lilia. You're scary. Super scary. If someone said you were out for blood, I wouldn't doubt them.

—Yes.

—Ahh, you're hopeless! Totally hopeless! Well, just don't overdo it, okay?

Lilia had also received Sakura's permission. There was nothing holding her back now. Lilia glared at all three girls in turn, and fixed her gaze on Sera. Sera started shaking in fear, and, as if trying to say something, her mouth opened and closed without a sound passing through her lips. Lilia had no sympathy for her.

"Even as a joke, in the name of the house of Earl Valdia, which counts itself as one of the upper noble houses, you've done something truly foolish."

"B-but....I was... for Mistress Lilia, I..."

"Nobody asked you to do this sort of thing."

Schizophrenia – Chapter 39

Lilia could only sigh. Whatever she said, it would fall on deaf ears. They were utterly convinced that they were the ones in the right. Lilia's irritation only grew. It was as if her past self were standing right in front of her. Under her breath, Lilia whispered, *it's about that time*, and moved her gaze alone toward the classroom door.

At the same time, the door opened, and the teacher came in. The Prince followed soon after. It was plain to see that they were both bewildered by the bizarre atmosphere that had fallen over the classroom.

Lilia shifted her gaze back to Sera.

"This is a good opportunity, so I'll declare this plainly."

Lilia raised her voice so that the Prince could hear her clearly as well. The Prince and the teacher looked over to Lilia. In the corner of her eye, she could see them both frown as if to say, *what are you doing this time?*

"I...have lost all interest in that foolish prince."

Not even trying to hide it, Sera's eyes opened wide in surprise. The Prince was also at a loss for words, but his face quickly started turning red.

"To be honest, I don't even want to imagine being by that idiot's side."

The Prince's eyes were still as he started moving over to where Lilia was. Taking note of that, Lilia brandished a smile at Sera.

"...!"

Sera froze in her seat, and the Prince's footsteps came to a stop. Lilia looked down on Sera and uttered a quiet declaration.

"As for you, I no longer need you by my side."

Lilia withdrew her gaze from Sera, and fixed her eyes on the Prince. The Prince glared back in response.

"Why you, running your mouth like that all you want..."

"Oh my, aren't you suffering under some misunderstanding here?"

Cutting through the Prince's words, Lilia posed that question cheerfully. Before the Prince could say anything further, Lilia took the scrap of paper on her desk, holding it out to him.

"What's this?"

He took it in confusion, reading the words written on the note. In that instant, the Prince's expression was dyed in one of rage.

"What the hell is this?!"

The prince shouted and scrutinised his surroundings. Everybody averted their eyes from his gaze. In the same moment, Lilia cheerfully filled him in.

“Your Highness. This note was written by Sera Valdia, who is sitting right here. I borrowed the note from Tina.”

“What did you just say...?”

When the Prince glared at Sera, she sent a pleading glance to those around her, looking as if she might cry. But nobody dared meet her eyes. They’ve already realised that there’s nothing they can do for her now.

“I’ll leave this one’s punishment up to you, Your Highness.”

Lilia’s voice echoed throughout the now utterly silent classroom. The Prince quickly came back to his senses and levelled another glare at Lilia.

“That’s right, *you*...what you said just before was too...”

“I have no intention of retracting my words.”

Dumbfounded, the Prince couldn’t speak, so Lilia continued where she left off, saying *after all*,

“It’s your responsibility to protect Tina. It’s none of my business who you fall in love with, but your show of favour toward her will also attract hostility from your surroundings. Do try to understand that.”

“That shouldn’t...”

The Prince’s words stopped there. Without saying anything more, his gaze fell to the scrap of paper in his hand. Lilia didn’t hide her sigh.

“Your Highness. You cast me away and chose Tina. After going that far, if you aren’t even going to protect that girl... what are you trying to accomplish?”

The Prince raised his head. He looked as if he were about to say something, but in the end, he couldn’t seem to put it into words. Lilia averted her eyes from the Prince and spoke,

“Looking at you up close, you really are nothing but a foolish prince.”

Leaving the Prince with those icy words, Lilia left the classroom at a slow, deliberate pace.

—You’ve suddenly got some free time, huh?

—So it seems.

After she left the classroom, Lilia wandered around the school building aimlessly. As she walked, she replayed the scene in the classroom in her mind over and over again. *I’ve sure gone and done it again*, lamented Lilia as she wallowed in regret. Sakura laughed and told her it would be fine, but no matter how you look at it, her actions would do nothing to improve her public image. Even Lilia could understand that now.

—I wonder what’s going to happen to that girl.

—If you're talking about Sera, she likely won't be able to remain at this academy. She probably won't be driven out, but after making His Highness an enemy, I doubt there's anyone willing to lend her a hand.

Talk of what happened today will spread quickly. And then, everyone will refuse to acknowledge her presence. They'll treat her as if she wasn't even there. Without anyone to talk to, Sera's life at the academy will become a lonely one. What she does after that is up to her. However, given Sera's personality, it's likely she'll flee from the academy.

—Hey, Lilia. So this is just an idea, but...

—What?

—That girl; Sera, was it? Take her under your wing.

Lilia's feet came to a halt, and she dubiously raised her eyebrow. When she asked Sakura why, she said:

—It's just a feeling, I guess. I mean, in the first place, she did all of those things for your sake. If you teach her how to behave properly around her surroundings, I'm sure she'll become a good person.

—Even though I'm the one that backed her into a corner?

—Well, that's...yeah. After all that's happened, I think you really did go too far... But I think it might actually be alright. If you try talking to her this weekend, I'm sure she'll cling to you desperately.

Lilia had misgivings about the way Sakura wanted to go about it, but decided to believe in her and follow her plan. Lilia had known all three of those girls since she enrolled in the academy. Though Sera is reaping what she sowed, it would be a lie to say that Lilia had no thoughts of finishing her off. By the same token, she couldn't say she didn't feel some small desire – truly, only the smallest inclination – to help Sera.

—Yup. I have to say, it's hard to tell how you really feel. I mean, your feelings toward Sera are so weak...

—To be perfectly honest, I don't care one way or the other.

—And that's exactly what makes you Lilia, damn it.

Confusingly, Sakura muttered, *We've got a long road ahead of us, huh...* With no destination in mind, Lilia started heading toward the library.

Lilia entered the usual library room with Ray's permission, and listened to Sakura's lecture as usual. And then, Ray said:

"I heard that Mistress Lilianne and His Highness The Prince got into a quarrel at last night's party."

Lilia couldn't help but freeze after hearing the words Ray uttered. But Lilia immediately pretended nothing was wrong, and lowered her gaze to the book in front of her, pretending to read. Lilia tried to put on an air of calmness, but her stiff expression betrayed her. Ray didn't seem to notice her expression, fortunately, as he was busy reading through the textbook in front of him.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 40

“Before I came here, I overheard several people talking about it. There was talk of His Highness The Prince breaking off his engagement before, but now it seems to be confirmed.”

“S-So it would seem...”

—Lilia, calm down! Yer voice ish trembling!

—You’re the one talking strangely. So what, did this boy actually know who I am?

—I-I don’t think so. No, I don’t think he does. He was probably just bringing up something to talk about, I think.

Lilia peered at Ray’s expression indiscreetly. He was glaring at the textbook at front of him, and then he let out a moan.

“Ray, why...why are you bringing up this Lilianne person all of a sudden?”

“Huh? No real reason. For her to be able to get into a quarrel with the prince, I was simply wondering just what kind of person she was. Come to think of it, you’re also part of the upper-class nobility, aren’t you, Mistress Lilia? Have you met Mistress Lilianne before?”

—Sakura. Which one is it? Has he realised who I am? Or has he not?

—Nn...He probably...hasn’t realised.

—Alright. I’ll trust your judgement, Sakura.

Lilia took a deep breath, and reciprocated Ray’s gaze. Ray’s smile was carefree as always. Seeing that, Lilia couldn’t believe that he was deceiving her.

“I do know *of* her. However, I haven’t talked with her personally.”

—Yup. That’s not a lie.

“Ah, that makes sense. Just based off the fact that she was quarrelling with His Highness The Prince, she sure seems like quite the self-important person, huh?”

“Y-You could be right there...”

Lilia’s expression stiffened. Knowing nothing about her, it would be easy to see her that way. As Lilia was thinking to herself, *perhaps I should think more carefully about the way I conduct myself*, Sakura said:

—Umm, Lilia. People who *do* know you well also think you’re self-important.

—That’s... I’ll take more care from now on...

“I’m sure I’ll have the chance to talk to her eventually.”

Before she could say something tactless or unnecessary, Lilia tried to bring the topic to a close. Whether he realised what she was doing or not, Ray said,

“Oh, really? I’ll look forward to it.”

He said so with a smile. Lilia returned a vague smile of her own, and brought her gaze back to her book.

After that, Lilia's normal everyday life continued for some time. From the next day onward, Sera no longer followed Lilia around. However, it wasn't as if she'd stopped coming to class altogether. She simply remained at her own desk quietly.

Of course, when Lilia entered the room, at first Sera tried to start a conversation with her. However, when Lilia ignored her, she gave up and returned to her own seat. After that, every time someone she knew came in, Sera tried to talk to them, too—but nobody wanted to speak with her.

Even so, the fact that Sera didn't attempt to flee from the classroom was something Lilia could honestly praise her for. Lilia didn't know whether that was because Sera had reflected on her actions or not, but for the moment, it seemed she wasn't going to make a move.

By way of a rumour, Lilia had heard that Sera was summoned by the prince after school had ended. The prince likely pushed her relentlessly for answers. Lilia hoped Sera and the prince would both take something away from the incident, but Sakura thought that would be expecting too much.

Incidentally, Tina was quite troubled when she heard about this. However, in front of Lilia, she simply gave her a strained smile and thanked her.

By the weekend, nothing had changed. Sera sat at her own seat, and cast her gaze down in silence.

—Hey, Lilia.

Sakura's voice echoed in her head, and Lilia turned her thoughts to that.

—Is it okay to leave those five people aside from Sera alone?

Sakura was referring to the remaining five people who had sent those notes to Tina. From her agents' investigation, Lilia knew who the culprits were. Yet, Lilia had not laid a hand on any of those five people.

—There's no need. By making an example of Sera, I don't think there's anyone left stupid enough to pester Tina any further. Well, it'll likely only serve as a temporary measure, though.

—Hmmm...that's fine, then.

At that moment in their conversation, the teacher, followed by the prince, entered the classroom. Just as usual, the teacher sat at his desk, the prince at his, and class began. And of course, Lilia...

—Today's lesson is — science!

—Yes, yes.

In order to listen to Sakura's lecture, Lilia tuned everything else out.

The morning classes were over, as was lunch, and so Lilia spent the afternoon at the library. After this completely ordinary day came to an end, Lilia didn't head back to her room, but rather, headed towards the classroom.

Just as class ended, the teacher came out of the classroom. When he saw Lilia, his eyes opened wide.

"Sir, aren't you being a bit disrespectful?"

"A-ahh...Sorry about that. I didn't think you'd be coming back... But, Aldis—and I realise I'm being a bit rude—but I don't want to be told that by someone who doesn't even pay attention in class."

"Oh my, so you did realise. My deepest apologies."

"It's obvious you have no intention of changing your attitude. Well, while your grades are still good, I won't say anything more."

The teacher ended the conversation there, and without saying anything else, disappeared down the hallway. Lilia watched him until he was out of sight, and a slight sense of admiration showed on her face.

—That teacher, he realised, huh. That you weren't paying any attention to his class.

—I didn't think that he'd realised...surprisingly, he saw straight through me. I need to be more careful.

If that class was at least a little more meaningful, Lilia started thinking, but comparing it to Sakura's lectures was perhaps too harsh. Lilia sighed slightly, and then opened the door to the classroom.

The classroom was full of students making idle chatter, but as soon as Lilia stepped in, the room fell quiet. *They really didn't need to be so mindful of me*, thought Lilia as she looked from one end of the classroom to the other. Nobody would meet her eyes.

Though she felt that something was off, Lilia started looking for the person she'd come here to see; Sera. And she found her instantly.

Sera was still sat in her own seat. Because she was looking down, Lilia couldn't see the expression on her face. And surrounding Sera were Kris and her entourage. Lilia could also see her other two followers hanging around the same place. Just by seeing that, Lilia could imagine what these girls were up to.

—Just what is that Idiot Prince doing?

—He's nowhere around, huh. Well, he's an unpredictable guy that can disappear at any moment, so I guess it can't be helped.

—Well, he *is* still a prince, even if he doesn't act like it. It's possible he has been summoned to the castle. More importantly...

When Lilia looked at Kris and everyone standing around her, they all averted their eyes. *My, my*, Lilia thought as she started walking over to them.

—Lilia. Help her out, okay?

—I know.

Lilia kept her reply short, and moved to stand in front of Kris and her entourage.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 41

“Just what... Is going on here?”

Everyone was silent towards Lilia’s question. Even Kris awkwardly averted her gaze and looked elsewhere. When Lilia turned her eyes towards her two followers, they shrunk back, trembling.

“It has nothing to do with you.”

Seemingly unable to endure the silence, Kris spoke. Lilia glanced over at her, and nodded in agreement.

“True. And what I decide to do is none of your business either.”

“Hah...?”

As Kris was tilting her head at Lilia’s sudden declaration, Lilia made her way over to Sera. She stood in front of her desk and called out.

“Sera.”

“.....”

“Sera Valdia!”

Sera jumped at hearing her full name called and quivered in her seat. She timidly peered at Lilia’s face. Expressionless and calm, Lilia looked down at Sera.

“We need to talk. Come with me.”

“Eh... Umm, to where...?”

Sera asked with fear in her eyes. Lilia felt a tinge of irritation.

“Does it really matter? Just come with me already.”

“Y-yes...!”

Sera sprung up from her seat hearing the coldness in Lilia’s words. Lilia began walking, and Sera after her.

“Well then, everyone, have a good day.”

When Lilia said those words with a smile as she bid them farewell, everyone in the classroom couldn’t help but stiffen their expressions in unison.

Lilia brought Sera back to her room at the dorm. They sat down at a table facing each other. Full cups of black tea were set in front of them, which Lilia had tasked Alisa with preparing beforehand.

In the middle of the table was dorayaki bought from the south side. They weren’t exactly the best pairing for black tea, but Sakura kept pestering Lilia about how she wanted to taste them again so Lilia had them brought out here. These were in fact brought over just yesterday by Tina when she’d come to visit.

Lilia picked up a dorayaki and took a bite, indicating with her hand for Sera to help herself as well. Sera, while perplexed by all this, still reached out to take one and put it in her mouth.

“...! It’s, really good...”

“Right? This is a confection from the southern district. They’re one of my new favourites.”

Sera looked on in wide-eyed surprise at hearing about the southern district. Though Lilia found it laughable that it could be shocking to such a degree, she herself would probably have had the exact same reaction if she had heard that some other upper class nobles had gone to the southern district.

“Well then, Sera. It’s about time we get to the main topic.”

With Lilia beginning the real conversation, Sera quietly closed her eyes, and nodded. Straightening her back, she went to look straight into Lilia’s eyes in seriousness.

“Sera, what is that you plan to do from here on?”

“I was thinking of returning back home.”

Her answer was just as expected.

“For all the trouble that I have caused you, Miss Lillianne, please accept my deepest apologies.”

Sera deeply lowered her head. Seeing that display, Lilia gave a scornful laugh.

“So basically, you’re going to run away. How disappointing.”

“For *you*... To be saying that...”

Sera’s eyes narrowed, but she soon came back to herself with a start, and lowered her head once again. Lilia felt there was quite enough of the head lowering already, but she decided to let her do as she pleased.

“I spoke rashly. My humblest apologies.”

Rashly, so she says, but that was probably just her real feelings leaking out. The one who drove Sera to this point was Lilia after all. What’s more, there was that incident where Lilia *did* in fact run away from the Prince herself, becoming a shut-in. That was probably where her words stemmed from. However, Lilia ignored all of that. Sticking to calling the kettle black, she looked coldly at Sera.

“No matter what anyone says, the fact that you have chosen the option to run away will not change. Or perhaps, are you planning on coming back again afterwards?”

At that question, Sera weakly shook her head, as one would expect. Lilia felt like she could, ever so slightly, understand what Sera was feeling. She herself was someone who had run away, and if not for Sakura, she likely wouldn’t have ever come back to the academy again. Although, according to that ‘story’ of Sakura’s, going back to the academy did indeed happen to her.

“So you don’t intend to remain at this academy?”

“No... Honestly, I cannot endure it. I’ve come to realise that during this one week.”

That was quite understandable. Though Lilia had only seen her situation during lunchtimes, it would definitely take something else to withstand being so thoroughly ignored. It was, in a sense, even harsher than simply getting harassed.

“Well then, Sera. I wonder if you have any intention of taking the third option.”

“The... Third option?”

“Yes, Sera. You, shall become one of my people.”

Not understanding Lilia’s declaration, Sera tilted her head.

“Though it’s not like I’m telling you to become my maid, or anything. In a certain sense, it would be like going back to how we were before all this. Following under me, and abiding by my orders. All the while, you would come under my protection. That’s not such a bad deal, is it?”

“That... Would be quite advantageous for myself, but... How is there anything in this for you, Mistress Lilianne? In any case, I do not see any reason for you to take in someone regarded as an enemy of His Highness. And I am certain that the other two would happily take on this same offer...”

“I have no need for something like that.”

Sera’s expression cramped up upon hearing that. Up until recently, she had been in the exact same boat as the other two, and she never expected to hear that they were actually unnecessary. Putting it that way, it was like her whole school life up until now had been denied at its very core. But of course, it was them who had chosen to cling to Lilia, so they had no right to blame her, either.

“I have no need for someone who could betray me at any point. And regarding that, you no longer have anyone you can rely on other than me. There would be no way for you to betray me. One couldn’t ask for a more convenient chess piece.”

Lilia let out a vulgar laugh. Sera’s face paled in response to this, but she did not deny it.

“However, His Highness has it out for me at the moment.”

“Oh my, is that really a problem? There’s no need to worry about that kind of guy, at all.”

That kind of talk would definitely get you punished for lese majeste outside of the academy. Sera’s eyes went wide, and then, she let out a wry smile.

“I’d been under the impression that all of this might have been a plan to get back with His Highness, but those words just now were your true feelings huh.”

“Get back with His Highness? Me? Please don’t say that even as a joke, it’s quite disgusting.”

“Mistress Lilia, perhaps that might be a bit much.”

Alisa, who was standing at the ready behind Lilia, finally felt she couldn’t look on anymore and chided her lady to mind her words bit more. Lilia simply shrugged, and responded that she’ll be more careful. Sera looked on at this exchange with great interest.

“You seem quite close even though she is your maid.”

“Well, it’s not as if there’s a rule against being close with your servants or anything.”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

Sera let out a relaxed laugh, but very quickly returned to a serious expression. She looked directly into Lilia’s eyes, as Lilia returned her gaze. Without a trace of mirth, she asked seriously.

“Mistress Lilianne, is it really alright? It may be strange coming from me, but as I am now, I believe I am no more than a liability.”

“Well, I certainly don’t think so. Right now, I am asking you to come under my command. Make a decision already and give me your answer.”

As Lilia began to feel a tinge of irritation and strengthened her tone, Sera immediately bowed before her. It was to apologise, as well as,

“I shall be under your care, Mistress Lilianne.”

“Very well. Best regards.”

Hearing Sera’s words, a satisfied smile rose up on Lilia’s face.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 42

After they finished their tea, Alisa came to collect their cups. Lilia stood from her seat, getting Sera's attention.

"Now then, Sera. Before anything else, there are some things I must have you do."

Sera was a little surprised, but nodded firmly. The slightly frightened expression on her face bothered Lilia, but she reluctantly ignored it.

"Go and apologise to Tina."

When Lilia said that, Sera was lost for words, and her face immediately paled. For a noble—especially a high-ranking noble—her reaction was easy to understand. *Why should I have to lower my head to my inferior?* She was probably thinking something of that nature. Lowering your head to lower-ranking nobles and commoners was thought of as nothing short of humiliation.

"Sera. I'll say this right now."

"Yes..."

"If I'm going to be responsible for you from now on, stop looking down on lower-ranking nobles, commoners, and the like."

Likely not expecting those words, Sera gulped and nodded gravely.

—Try your best too, Lilia.

—I know that...

Lilia didn't realise she'd been looking down on her surroundings that much, but it seemed that those around her saw her differently. It was something she still needed to work on, she supposed.

"Now then, let's go. I won't allow you to refuse."

When Lilia said as much, Sera rose from her chair in resignation.

As usual, the moment Lilia stepped foot on the second floor, the students around her fell completely silent. However, seemingly starting to get used to her presence, they soon went back to their own conversations. This time, Sera was with her, but perhaps because her presence wasn't as startling as Lilia coming down here, nobody took any further notice of them.

"You just entered the room, Mistress Lilia, and yet nobody has greeted you...!"

"Sera, stop it."

"Ah...I didn't...please excuse me."

Sera meekly lowered her head. Lilia sighed and crossed over the second floor entrance. She could feel a few gazes lingering on her, but that was it.

When they arrived in front of Tina's room, Lilia immediately knocked on the door.

"M-Mistress Lilianne...!"

“What? It’s not as if you need to prepare yourself. Just acknowledge your mistake and apologise for it.”

“That...might be so, but...”

Sera was chewing the inside of her cheeks, looking as if she wanted to say something, but Lilia took no notice of it. Eventually, the door opened, and Tina came out. When she saw Lilia, Tina smiled, and when she noticed Sera, her expression turned to confusion.

“Lilia, what brings you here? Who is this...?”

“Sera Valdia. She’s from the Earl Valdia family. She’s one of the people who sent you those inane letters.”

When she heard that, Tina’s eyes opened wide, and she fixed her gaze on Sera. Sera awkwardly looked away, so Lilia glared at her slightly. Sera immediately rectified her attitude.

“Um...Miss Tina...”

“Y-Yes!”

Tina yelped her reply and straightened her back. Sera aside, Lilia wondered what Tina was so nervous about. Incidentally, Sakura was trying to hold back her laughter inside Lilia’s mind. Was there really something all that amusing happening here?

“A few days ago, I did something very disrespectful. Please accept my deepest apologies.”

Sera lowered her head, and Tina visibly hesitated, wondering how she should respond. Lilia lending a hand to Tina—is something she didn’t do, and she instead quietly watched over the interaction between the two.

“Um... You don’t need to worry about me, so it’s alright...”

“Thank you very much.”

Hearing Tina somehow force those words out, Sera answered her as such with her head lowered. After that, there was an awkward silence that stretched on for some time. Tina looked to Lilia for help, but Lilia pretended not to notice.

“Well...umm...”

Tina thought for a little while, and spoke.

“If you like...please come in.”

The two of them were invited into Tina’s room.

As expected, Tina didn’t have three chairs in her room, so she asked Sera to sit on the bed and Lilia to sit at her study desk. This was probably Tina’s way of being considerate of Lilia, but she ignored her and sat next to Sera. This time, Sera was the one out of sorts, but Lilia paid it no mind.

However, likely feeling sorry for Sera, Tina said this with a wry smile.

“Lilia. I feel sorry for Miss Sera, so sit over here.”

“I suppose it can’t be helped...”

Lilia sat in the chair, and Sera breathed a sigh of relief. Seeing that, Tina smiled.

“I’m surprised, though. I can’t believe you suddenly brought her over here...”

“This is the sort of thing you should apologise personally for, right? I’ll bring along the other five people too, at some point.”

“No, it’s fine. In fact, please don’t. That’s way too much pressure...”

Is that how it is, Lilia thought to herself, finding her reaction strange. But it couldn’t be helped, so Lilia acquiesced.

“Still, you didn’t need to go this far for me, Lilia.”

“I simply did as I wished to do. It’s not something you need to worry about, Tina.”

“Geez... Lilia, despite everything you’re saying, you really are nice.”

When Tina said that with a wry smile, Sera, who was sitting next to her, raised her head. Probably because she looked up so vigorously, Tina was surprised. Sera looked directly at Tina and said,

“Miss Tina... You, you understand...”

“E-Eh? What do I understand?”

“Mistress Lillianne’s kindness!”

Sera stood up and shouted this. Lilia was dumbfounded, but Tina’s lips curled into a smile.

“Yeah! Lilia is kind, isn’t she? I wonder why other people don’t seem to understand that?”

“It’s exactly as you say! They must all be blind. I misunderstood you, Miss Tina. You see the real Mistress Lillianne. We must talk more!”

“Right you are! Yes, yes! Let’s talk much, much more!”

I wonder why. They started getting overly excited when the topic of Lilia came up. In front of the person herself, no less. Lilia wanted them to think about her feelings a little. At first, Sakura was dumbfounded along with Lilia, but now she was roaring with laughter.

—Hey, Sakura. Hasn’t this become a hassle? Why are these two putting me on a pedestal?

—Ahaha! I think it’s fine! You’re kind, Lilia, so you should overlook these things!

—With just Tina before, it was already a hassle...but now there’s another one...

—Rather, since they’ve begun meshing so well it’s making the situation even worse! The chemical reaction it’s caused will raise the hassle by at least threefold!

It seemed Sakura was really enjoying the current situation. Lilia heaved a heavy sigh, and looked to the heavens.

—Sakura. Do something.

—The fact that you're loved is a good thing. Hang in there, Lilia. Ah, but if they end up making a fan club, I'm not giving the #1 spot away. That's mine.

—It's starting to feel like you stopped joking a while ago...

Feeling a headache coming on, Lilia pressed her finger to her forehead and sighed deeply.

Schizophrenia – Chapter 43

Lilia left Tina's room and started heading back to her own room. She entered her bedroom and collapsed at her desk.

After that, Tina and Sera continued to sing Lilia's praises. She really didn't know if she'd actually done anything to warrant that level of praise. At first, she was embarrassed, but by the end, she could only be shocked.

In the end, Lilia didn't end up saying much, and she excused herself from Tina's room along with Sera. She felt like they wasted a lot of time there, but it was good that Sera had managed to make a good impression on Tina. She remained unconvinced whether that was due to the mysterious praise that they had piled on Lilia.

—On the way there, it wasn't clear whether she had made any progress, but...it seems it's fine like this, Sakura.

—Yup. It's perfect. Good job this week, Lilia.

—Good work this week too, Sakura. Ahh, I'm really tired. Especially toward the end, a wave of tiredness swept over me all at once...

—Ahaha. Well, it's certainly better than being hated. I think it's fine if it continues like this.

She said that so easily, but Lilia wondered whether Sakura really knew the depths of her worries. Though even if she brought attention to it, there was nothing to be done about it, so she didn't say anything.

—Now then, tomorrow marks start of your much-awaited weekend! The weekend's for self-study! Let's go out somewhere!

—Do you understand what the words 'self-study' mean?

While she was surprised, the fact is that Lilia did actually have plans to go out tomorrow, so she wasn't saying that seriously. They'd already decided beforehand to go out. Because of the evening party last week, they didn't have much of an opportunity to tour the south side of town. This time, Lilia had sought out Alisa's assistance beforehand. She wasn't particularly opposed to the idea, so agreed to assist Lilia.

After all, it's not as if I would be welcome there, Lilia thought with a bitter smile and some resignation.

—Let's take our time going around to all of the different stores. Also, Lilia, I want to eat some strawberry daifuku.

—I'm the one doing the eating, though...

While she was talking like that with Sakura, internally, Lilia's excitement for tomorrow grew.

The Next Day. Lilia left her room with Alisa, and went to the same room where she had changed her clothes the last time. She changed quickly, and was seen out by Alisa as she headed out the front gate. In much the same way as last time, she was seen off with a smile and the words, "have a safe trip."

—Let's try going a little further today.

—I'm fine with that, but remember the route we take. I'll be busy eating.

—You're turning defiant, huh. But roger that! Leave the route to me, and eat delicious food in my place!

Like that, Sakura and Lilia began walking around the town. When she found something that looked tasty, she bought it and ate it. It wasn't as if she had decided on a different route this time; she simply ate anything that caught her eye. By the time she'd visited the fifth store, Lilia had completely forgotten the way back. But she had left that up to Sakura, so it was probably fine.

—Haaa, the last one was gross, but this is delicious~ I'm so happy...

Lilia was starting to get a little, or rather, very worried, but it should be okay.

After that, Lilia went around to whatever shop took her fancy and ate as she walked. They decided to commit to memory all the shops that Sakura and Lilia both thought were delicious. There were many flavours and types of food that Lilia hadn't even known about before, so the experience was very fresh.

Before she knew it, it was the afternoon. Thinking it about time to head back to the school, she changed direction, and—

—Lilia, stop!

Sakura's voice echoed in her head. Frowning a little, Lilia quickly checked her immediate surroundings. *Could someone that knows me be here*, she thought, but the only person she knew that would come to this place would be Tina or her friends.

—Is there someone here?

—Yep. I was a little surprised.

That vague response had Lilia frowning, so just in case, she headed inside a nearby store. Watching the people that passed by the store, Lilia caught sight of somebody she knew. A boy surrounded by a throng of soldiers.

“Your Highness!”

She heard a surprised and delighted voice come from somewhere around her. The one person that Lilia was least happy to see was here. Her expression instinctively stiffened and she fled further into the store.

—Why has the Prince come here, of all places...

—I know, right? I was surprised too. He's the person I least expected to come here... But, actually, it might be precisely because he's the prince that he's here.

—For what reason?

—As part of an inspection or something, maybe? I don't really know that much about what the royal family does, so I can't really draw a solid conclusion one way or the other.

I see, Lilia nodded. Certainly, Lilia had also heard of the prince making the rounds of various establishments as part of his inspections. She hadn't been there to see it before, but she wouldn't have thought he would be so heavily guarded.

—Yup. This is starting to get a bit too dangerous.

So Sakura seemed to be thinking the same thing as me, though she was speaking in a strange tone of voice.

Lilia continued to watch them for a while, and a soldier came running from somewhere. He reported something to the swarm of soldiers, the prince included. Hearing that, the group changed course. They walked into the store directly opposite the one Lilia was currently in. Breathing a sigh of relief, she bought one small baked sweet and went back outside.

—They seem to be searching for something, or someone, huh.

—And the prince himself came along to join the search? No matter how important it might be, that...

wouldn't happen, Lilia wanted to say, but it was *that* prince they were talking about. If it was something important to him, it isn't strange at all to consider him going to search for it himself. Lilia didn't know what it was, but that piqued her interest just a little. But that was it. She didn't want to get involved.

—Let's forget about that and pick up where we left off!

—You're right. Let's go back to touring the town. Now, where should we...

"Miss Lilia?"

Lilia stopped moving in an instant. *No way*, Sakura said, at a complete loss for words. Lilia slowly turned to look over her shoulder, where the voice had come from.

Ray was standing there.

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“That is you, Miss Lilia...right?”

—Sakura! What should I do?! He’s trying to confirm my identity, so I should run away, right?!

—Alright. When you start panicking, the first thing you need to do is calm down, right? So, umm, Lilia. If you make a run for it, he’s only going to think that he’s right.

—So what should I do then?!

Lilia was completely overtaken by panic. If it came out that a Duke’s Daughter was shopping around here, she could only imagine how much trouble it would cause her family. She wasn’t concerned about what total strangers would think of her shopping exploits, but she was a little worried about how her family might react.

—Lilia, calm down. Okay, now take a deep breath.

Just as Sakura said, Lilia took a deep breath. Ray was looking on with some confusion, but Lilia put that out of her mind.

—Calm down, Lilia. Ray still thinks that you’re just “Miss Lilia”, not the Duke’s Daughter, Lilianne Aldis. So, don’t start panicking just yet.

Oh right, Lilia thought to herself when Sakura reminded her of that fact. She had her doubts as to whether that really was the case, but right now, it seemed all Ray really knew was that Lilia was a part of the upper nobility. Lilia felt palpable relief when she realised the situation was still salvageable, and having calmed down somewhat, asked Sakura what she should do next.

—Instead of awkwardly trying to trick him, how about trying to win him over? Ray is sharp, so I think he knew it was you just by seeing how you were dressed.

—Alright... Got it.

Lilia turned to face Ray, and cleared her throat to try to calm herself down. As if in response, Ray straightened his back. Lilia wondered why he was reacting like that, but decided not to dwell on it and responded to his question.

“You have sharp eyes, Ray.”

“Ah-ha! Just as I thought, it was you, Miss Lilia! I didn’t expect to see you around here, so you caught me off-guard!”

A giant smile began to take shape on Ray’s face. It seemed he was happy to see Lilia, and those genuine feelings were clearly showing on his face. To think that up until a moment ago, she was considering whether she should deceive Ray... Lilia felt a small sense of guilt for thinking such thoughts.

“Still, I really was surprised to see you here. You’re an upper noble, right, Miss Lilia? So I assumed I wouldn’t see you visiting these sorts of places.”

Likely overhearing the words ‘upper noble’, the people in her immediate vicinity bristled in surprise and turned toward Ray. And of course, they also looked to the person he was talking to, Lilia. As her expression stiffened, Sakura’s next instruction arrived.

Get both of yourselves out of here right now, she said.

Lilia nodded immediately, walked over to where Ray was, and took his hand. She ignored his surprised expression, and walked out at a brisk pace.

And like that, they had left the store, and walked into a dark, narrow alley. And then, Lilia sighed.

“U-umm...”

Ray’s voice brought her back to her senses. Come to think of it, she had just grabbed his hand without saying a word and dragged him over here... When she turned around to apologise, Ray was the one hanging his head apologetically.

“I’m sorry...you were trying to hide your status, weren’t you...”

His words surprised her. He seemed to have completely grasped the reason for Lilia’s actions. It seemed he really was quite perceptive. At the very least, if Ray had done to Lilia what she had just done to him, she probably wouldn’t be able to remain calm or hold back her displeasure.

—Actually, I think it’s rude to Ray to compare yourself to him.

—Though I think what you just said was blatantly rude to me.

—You’re imagining things.

Sakura laughed cheerfully, while Lilia could only sigh. She brought her attention back to Ray. He stared nervously back at Lilia.

“You’d do well to be more careful from now on.”

Lilia’s words came out somewhat harsher than she intended, but she caught Ray muttering *that was close* in relief, and he smiled again.

“What did you come here to do, Mistress Lilia?”

Ray’s question left Lilia unable to respond. Ray was tilting his head in curiosity, and while he didn’t seem to have any ill intentions in asking her that, Lilia was still hesitant as to whether she should give him an honest answer.

—It should be okay to answer truthfully. This boy is someone you should be able to trust, probably.

Heeding Sakura’s advice, Lilia began to answer Ray’s question.

“A little while ago, I received some sweets from an acquaintance. They were called ‘Doriyaki’...have you heard of them?”

“I have! They’re delicious, aren’t they? I like them too.”

For some reason, Ray’s smile was practically gleaming. So gleaming, in fact, Lilia couldn’t look him in the eyes, and ended up turning away.

—Such a pure and honest smile, with not a shred of malice... it's simply too much for our tainted hearts to bear to look at, isn't it?

—I don't want to call my heart 'tainted'...

Although having said that, Lilia couldn't deny it, either.

“Ah, now it makes sense! You came here to buy some more yourself. Because you wanted to eat more of them. I wouldn't have thought you would have such a big appetite, Mistress...”

Something suddenly welled up inside of Lilia, and she grabbed hold of Ray's head tightly with her right hand. Ray was completely frozen. With a frightening smile on her face, Lilia spoke to Ray.

“Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. What was it you were trying to say?”

“Um, I mean... i-it's something you'd want to taste again, right! I understand that feeling well!”

Ahaha, Ray laughed with a stiff expression. *Ohoho*, Lilia laughed with a hollow smile.

—You're scary, you know that?

—Quiet, you. Who's fault do you think this is? If I'm not mistaken, you're the one with the 'big appetite', are you not?

—Uguu... I can't deny that...

Lilia was satisfied with Sakura's silence, and then she released Ray's head from her grip. Now free to move, Ray took two, then three steps back, and stared fixedly at Lilia cautiously. He even looked like he was tearing up a little.

Maybe I went a bit too far...

“I'm sorry about that. But Ray, you would do well to remember that there are things you should and should not say to a woman.”

—That might be true, but I think you're the only one who would get this angry, Lilia...

—You don't seem to be reflecting on your actions at all...

—Hii! I'm sorry!

Lilia furrowed her brows without thinking, and Ray quickly lowered his head, likely thinking it was directed at him. And while Lilia was still surprised, he said this.

“I'm sorry! It's just as you said, those weren't words I should have said to a woman. I'll be more careful next time!”

“Y-Yes... As long as you understand. Mm...”

—I feel sorry for Ray. This is going to become a traumatic memory for him, you know.

—.....

—I'm sorry.

Chapter 45

I gave a small sigh, gathered my wits, and glared at Ray again. Ray was standing ramrod straight. I didn't mean to get so angry, so I feel a little sorry.

「So? What did Ray come here for? 」

「I am on a shopping trip. There are a lot of interesting things, so I was looking around here and there. Also, while doing that I wanted to buy some sweets ne.」 1

If you are not reading this on isohungrytls.com this chsoter is stolen.

「One would never guess you are like this, huh? 」

「Yes. I 2 really love to eat. 」

This frankness was really refreshing. Even though being easily fooled is not good, his blatant frankness was still undeniably refreshing, huh? Ray, who can say this without reservation seems a little enviable.

「That's right. Why don't we go together? There is a highly recommended shop here. 」

I'm a little intrigued when I hear that it's recommended. When I had visited Aira's recommended shops before, I was quite satisfied. I'm also interested in Ray's recommendations, but I wonder if it's okay to go with him?

—Lilia. Are you still hungry? Didn't you eat a lot?

— Well... To be honest, I can't say that I had too much though.

— Weight gain is a possibility.

—..... darn!

Come to think of it. Recently, even if it's not exactly prominent, but I seem to be getting fatter. I'm sure it wasn't just in my mind. That's why Sakura's words felt true. Of course, there were noble girls who didn't care, but Lilia was someone who cared about her appearance. When I heard that I might get fat, my appetite drastically fell.

Listening to Ray, Lilia sighed regretfully and shook her head.

「I'm sorry ne. It's about time I went back. I'm worried I might be late.」

「Is that so...it's a shame. Well then, let's go some other time.」

He didn't seem to give up going with Lilia. Lilia herself didn't hate it, she nodded.

「Yes. All right. If I have a chance.」 3

「Yes! It's a promise! 」

Lilia returned a smile to Ray who was laughing in such a carefree manner.

The two of them walked outside to the road, and then, Lilia turned towards the road to the school.

「I'm going home, but will Ray still look around for a while?」

「Yes. Thank you very much for today.」

Ray had his head lowered even though he did nothing wrong yet, and wore a bitter smile. Ray then laughed faintly and tried to go in the opposite direction from Lilia.

「Oh, that's right. Lilia—san.」

「What? 」

「A while ago, his highness the prince was here. Which way will you be going? 」

Should I be interested? Lilia wondered in her heart, as she walked along the road to the school. Estimating the prince's pace from that time, he should probably be right around here. Ray thought it would be alright and trusted Lilia enough to share this information.

「Then, thank you very much! 」

Hearing that, Ray ran.

It was in the direction opposite to the school.

— Huh? I was sure we would meet the prince couple.

— I 4 thought so, too. Looks like it won't be like that.

— I wonder why it's so. Maybe it's Ray that the prince is looking for!

— I don't see any connection between them at all.

—The king's secret child.

—How can you say such things so confidently?

Sakura laughed on seeing her exasperated look. Lilia also had a few doubts about Ray's actions, but she wouldn't find any answer for now. It would be useless to think about it. Lilia took her eyes off the street where Ray went running and began to walk to the school.

When Lilia returned to school, she gave Alisa a strawberry daifuku as a token of gratitude for her discretion, and then spent her time studying. She was studying while eating sweets she had bought

herself, but Sakura didn't mock her, and instead continued to lecture in a good mood from beginning to end.

Lilia spent the next few days of her holiday studying. You went to play on the day meant for self studies, so you have to study on holidays instead. These were Sakura's words, but Lilia agreed, so she studied in her bedroom for a long stretch till mealtime.

And at dinner time,

「Lilia sama. You have visitors.」

Hearing Alisa's voice, Lilia put her pen down. She was somewhat expectant.

Even though she acted like a lamb during a certain evening party, 5, she never expected that she would be able to experience such happiness again.

Dismissing Alisa, Lilia went to open the door herself. And,

「Good evening! Let's go for dinner, Lilia! 」

「Good evening...」

In addition to Tina, there were Aira and Katie looking awkward. And even next to them,

「What? Can you please not stare at me? 」

Chris was there, too. I'm confused about this situation since it was an unthinkable combination. Sakura's explanation that followed convinced me. 6

「I see. Tina aside, Aira and Katie won't be able to come this far in. No doubt someone would have obstructed them. Chris-san must have heard you three, must have had no choice but to join you. Thank you very much, Chris-san.」

When she said thank you to Chris with a smile on her face, Chris became flustered and openly began to tremble.

「I just happened to meet you! These three people said they wanted to see you 7, so I've only brought them here. That's all there is to it.」

「Before coming here, she encouraged me to meet you somewhere else. It's because it stands out if too many lower class aristocrats keep coming here.」

「Don't say unnecessary things, Tina-san! 」

When Chris shouted with a bright-red face, Tina and the others bowed their heads, apologizing while laughing gleefully. Exasperated, she returned her gaze towards Lilia.

「Liliane-sama. I believe we should take a tougher stance toward lower class people.」

When Chris said that, Lilia smiled.

「Thank you for your concern.」

「What...! I'm worried... 」

「But these three are my friends. We should treat our friends on equal footing, right? 」

Chapter 46

Chris, upon hearing that they were her friends, made an expression of confusion and then lightly sighed. Wearing a sympathetic expression, she whispered,

「But i recommend that at the very least you get together somewhere else. This is too conspicuous. This may give rise to some unpleasant rumors.」

「Oh, you don't have to worry about that. It's just a matter of crushing the people who spreads such rumors.」

Not only Chris but Tina's cheeks were also flush with happiness from Lilia's words. Perhaps she knew that with the kind of person Lilia was, she might really take action. Chris shook her head and bowed.

「If you are aware of that, I won't say anything else. Please excuse me as I take my leave.」

「Yes. Thank you, Chris.」

Saying that, Lilia laughed elegantly, following which, Chris returned a bitter smile and walked away. Tina tilted her head curiously after seeing her off.

「It was a rumor, but I heard that Lilia and Crystal 1 were on bad terms...」

「Oh, that's not true. We are childhood friends.」

— Eh!?

—Why are you surprised?

— No, I thought you two were not on good terms with each other. I assumed you had a strained relationship, but I didn't think she would be a childhood friend.

Sakura muttered this with a trace of surprise evident in her tone. What surprised me was not only Sakura but also Tina. Basically they could only know the inside affairs of the upper class aristocrats through rumors. Among the rumors, rumors of Lilia and Chris's estrangement were fairly common.

However, as a matter of fact their relationship wasn't strained. At present, because of the school, they have fewer interactions, but before this their relationship was one where they used to frequently drink tea at each other's mansions. From that time on, they were used to throwing harsh words at each other, but it was not out of malice, rather, they only pointed out each other's shortcomings.

However, because they spoke to each other quite informally and frankly, other people often thought they were seriously quarrelling. But Lilia always thought that their relationship was still the same.

「Oh, yes. It's time for dinner. Shall we go? 」

Lilia, upon remembering, clapped her hands and started to lead the way. Tina and others were still dumbstruck, but they followed quietly.

「I'll tell you one thing. 」

While walking, Lilia opened her mouth. She lowered her voice but it could still be heard by the three of them. 2

「This time, Chris must have recognized you as a friend of mine. If I am not available when something happens, you can count on Chris. Even if she looks like that, she takes good care of her own people.」

— Is that right?

— That's right. She shows no mercy to anyone who's hostile, but she is kind to the ones who aren't. That's why I admire her.

—You really can't judge a person from their appearance.

Lilia walked to the dining room as she nodded to Sakura.

When Lilia entered the dining room, the entire room quietened. The atmosphere became tense, but as soon as Tina and others came in, the tension dissipated, and everyone resumed chatting. Lilia, perplexed, followed Tina, who began to lead the way.

Suddenly hand was raised in the corner of the dining room. Tina and others seem to have noticed, and turned towards it. And, about six students who had finished their meals were leaving their seats.

「If you don't mind, please take this seat. 」

A male student said with a smile. In front of the stunned Lilia, Tina sat in one of the vacant seats, while she thanked him. Since it would be bad to tarry, Aira and the others following her sat down.

「Then, Liliane-sama, please excuse us.」

The boys smilingly bowed and moved away. Lilia's eyes widened with surprise at this unprecedented reaction towards her. 3

「What is this? 」

— Yes. I think it's thanks to Tina and others, if you ask me.

Sakura seemed to have an idea. She glanced at Tina, but she had already gone to the counter with Aira to get the food. When she looked at Katie, Katie quivered and pulled the chair in a sloppy manner.

「Um... For the time being, let's...」

「Yes... Excuse me. 」

When I took my seat, it was next to Tina's seat. After that, when I looked at Katie, she knitted her eyebrows as if she was troubled.

「This past week, though...Tina kept talking about Liliane-sama.」

「That's... What... 」

「Umm you see.... “Liliane-sama is actually a very kind person and she is really good to me. It would be nice if we became friends.” That's kind of stuff.」

「That girl... deciding things one-sidedly again... 」

「It's only because it's Tina, and not anyone else. Rather, if any other person adopts a Tina-like attitude, they would definitely be rebuked. 」

Katie then nodded and smiled wryly.

「Everybody knows this. Tina is especially one of a kind. That's why we were trying to make it easier for both of you to spend time and have her go back comfortably.」

— The two of you are completely treating her like a pet. Well, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

— Even though I admit it's convenient like this, I can't say I feel good about it. Oh well, let's use it. 4

Lilia thought to herself, it's fine if I can protect Tina and Alisa for now. To be honest, I have no interest in anyone else. Well if I am being honest, I wonder if Aira and Katie, who claim that Tina is their best friend, are also people I should protect.

When that thought crossed her mind, Lilia froze. Katie tilted her head towards Lilia, who had suddenly stopped moving, but Lilia just played it off with a friendly smile.

— Protect? I, Tina? Tina isn't my maid, right? So why? Because we are friends?

These thoughts kept turning in my mind. My own thoughts baffled me. It lasted until Tina and others came back, but Sakura began to make a fuss in front of the food, so the turning thoughts were interrupted.

☆

While Lilia was eating the food, Sakura was enjoying the taste. Unlike the dining room in the cafeteria for high ranking aristocrats, the dining room on this side was very nostalgic because there were many things similar to the food of her hometown.

Sakura was immersed in happiness, remembering the state of Lilia earlier, and was smiling naturally.

At first, I thought it was not possible to change it, but it seems to have changed little by little. Lilia sees Tina and Alisa as the targets to protect. Alisa, who was her maid and ally, and Tina, who was the first person to become her friend. I am honestly happy with the change.

That's fine. It's okay to stay at this rate. This pace is fine.

「Nfufu」

Sakura laughed gleefully and enjoyed it.

☆

Chapter 47

The next day. When Lilia took her seat in the classroom, the two people in her usual entourage also arrived. Lilia appropriately responded to their greetings. She thought it was annoying, but it was Sakura who advised not to ignore them.

Another person came in following them. Sera arrived in front of Lilia.

「Good morning, Liliane—sama.」

The other two instantly averted their eyes. Lilia wondered what they were thinking now. She turned towards her and smiled at Sera.

「Yes. Good morning, Sera. It truly is a great morning.」

The other two were dumbstruck and opened their eyes wide. Not only these two people, but everyone present in the classroom was just as shocked.

—Everyone is surprised. Yes, yes, this is great!

—Sakura. Aren't you enjoying yourself too much?

— Yes. I wanted to use that child to bring about this exact situation.

— Eh...

— Sorry. I'm just kidding, don't take it seriously.

Lilia doubted Sakura's words, but she was relieved first of all because it seemed that the former was not serious. Now, as Lilia glanced at Sera, the other two faces naturally entered her sight. Both of them were looking at Lilia for an explanation. Lilia however, gave no answer despite perceiving their gazes.

Sera was talking about yesterday's dinner. Lilia replied indifferently to it. Even if Lilia's attitude seemed to be grumpy at first glance, but it was actually a good one considering that often she didn't deign to answer. At least everyone in the classroom understood it. Lilia has allowed Sera to be by her side.

「Oh, Liliane-sama. Why are you talking to this person here? 」

Chris brought her entourage and arrived in front of Lilia with a smile. Lilia smiled back.

「This child came to me. Do you find anything wrong with talking to her? 」

Chris narrowed her eyes and probed at her. Lilia returned her gaze straight ahead. A while later, Chris nodded with a smile if understanding something.

「No, I have nothing to complain about. But please be careful.」

You'll probably be implicated if you stay with Sera. Everyone in the classroom seemed to think so, and Chris's entourage had a nasty smile on their faces. Sera was also pale.

「Yes. Thank you for your advice. I'll be careful.」

What Chris said was actually what she meant. Be careful not to be implicated by the people around you. That's all there was to it. When she saw Lilia's firm gaze, Chris nodded with satisfaction, and returned to her seat. 1

—When you change your perspective, the meaning of the words sounds completely different. I wish everyone could peacefully get along.

—There are many (complicated) things in the aristocratic society.

Towards Lilia's reply, Sakura gave a strange reaction. Lilia sighed inwardly and turned towards Sera. The latter seemed apologetic.

「Uh, Umm, Lilia—sama…」

「It's okay. You don't have to worry about it. Class is going to start soon, so go back to your seat.」

「Ye, yes…」

Sera was still anxious, but she quietly went back to her seat. The other two also returned to their seats with their heads tilted.

—I was wondering if those two would say something, but they remained silent.

— I'm glad it played out that way.

It can be said that it was more convenient this way. This excuse was better than her ruthlessly crushing their hearts. Sakura, on hearing this, sighed that this was no good.

The Classroom door opened, and the teacher came in along with the prince. Because of the strange atmosphere between Lilia and Sera, both their heads were tilted in confusion, however, very soon the prince soon took his seat, and the teacher stood in front of the teaching table.

As soon as the teacher's voice sounded, Lilia started listening to Sakura's lecture as usual.

When the morning classes were over, there was no longer any reason to stay there. Lilia immediately left the classroom the moment she heard the teacher declaring the class to be over. Although she was worried about Sera, she felt that being overprotective was not a good idea.

She went to pick up a sandwich from the cafeteria. The chefs were used to it, and they prepared fresh sandwiches whenever Lilia came. Their expressions were gentle whenever they handed them over to Lilia.

—What are the ingredients today?

After receiving the sandwich, Sakura always seemed to enjoy it. Lilia was indifferent to the sandwiches, but Sakura always seemed to be looking forward to them.

Lilia didn't care much about it since she felt that as long as it was edible, it didn't matter. However, it seemed to be important for Sakura, and sometimes she even praised the chefs.

As usual, Lilia finished her meal in the library room while teaching Ray, when Ray casually started speaking.

「Now that I think about it, there is be a test next week, but is Lilia-sama's study going well? 」

「Eh? 」

The school term was divided into two, that is, the first semester and second semester. There were three tests to examine their academic abilities in each semester, and she thought that the examinations should be announced soon. But she didn't think it was next week.

「Um? Lilia-sama, you were not aware? 」

「……………」

Lilia sat quietly in the chair and exhaled slowly. Then in her mind, she quietly asked.

—Sakura. What is this?

—Hii! Scary, Lilia! Why are you like this? The teacher clearly announced it!

—Ha? When?

—Near the start of the previous week. I think Lilia missed it because she was listening to me.

Lilia's temple throbbed slightly. As if sensing Lilia's mood, Ray quietly distanced himself from her.

Chapter 48

— In other words, you heard it, right?

— Yes. Of course.

— Why didn't you inform me, I wonder...?

She was asking questions in my mind, but before she knew it, her expression unconsciously changed into a cold smile. Poor Ray was trembling in the corner of the room, but Lilia didn't notice it.

— Wait! Wait, Lilia! It's not like that! It's not like I forgot to inform you or anything, and well, since it's Lilia, I don't think it's like that! 1

— You sure are brave.

— Yes. Or rather Lilia. Did you really need to know?

Suddenly, the atmosphere became serious, and Lilia frowned. Sakura seemed to think that there really was no need to study. When I asked her the reason,

—It's okay if Lilia leaves it alone for now. Instead, I wanted you to solve the immediate problems first.

It seemed that Sakura had decided not to tell Lilia after she had given it some thought. Lilia had nothing else to say after this. If Sakura decided there wouldn't be any issues, Lilia would trust her.

—But I wish you would have just told me something at least.

— Ah... yes. I apologize for that. I'll properly inform you next time.

Lilia sighed lightly, and turned her gaze toward Ray,

「What are you doing? 」

「Ah,ahaha...」

Ray's expression was pale, but Lilia couldn't think any reason for that. Lilia tilted her head, and asked Ray to snap out of it 2, and Ray, who recovered his bearing,

「Then, let's prepare for the exam. If you don't understand something, I'll make that a priority.」

Lilia widened her eyes upon hearing his words.

「Ah, Umm... Is Lilia-sama okay with that? 」

「I'll study after I get back to my room, so don't worry. No need to hold yourself back.」

Ray was a little apologetic, but he still pointed to a place he really had difficulty understanding. Lilia gave a nod of satisfaction upon seeing it, and began to explain as usual.

Only Sakura was aware of Ray staring at Lilia, but she didn't dare say anything.

Lilia, who had returned to her room after dining, made her way to the bedroom where she had some materials to study for the exam.

「Lilia-sama, you have a visitor.」

She stopped at Alisa's voice.

「Perhaps... Tina? 」

「Yes.」

She wondered if it was to invite her for dinner. If so, Lilia has already finished eating. It's not like she couldn't eat another meal, but unless the situation compelled her, she didn't want to overeat. As she went to greet Tina while thinking along that line,

「Lilia... help me with my studies...」 3

Lilia looked at Tina and sighed a bit.

「It's okay, Alisa」

「You'll have tea, won't you? I shall prepare it.」

Alisa politely bowed her head and began to prepare tea with a gentle smile. Lilia nodded with satisfaction and cheerfully led Tina to the table. When Lilia tapped the desk lightly, Tina apologetically placed down the teaching materials she had brought with her.

「So? Which parts are you unable to understand? 」

「Yes...First of all, I don't understand this part. And then...」

I tried to remember the areas that Tina was not good at. While doing so, Sakura's voice echoed in my head.

— Right. Lilia, can I make a prediction?

— It's a bit abrupt. All right, let's hear it.

— Well then. Lilia will hold study sessions here in the future. And everyone will call you teacher.

Lilia was taken aback from shock, but she soon noticed something. Sakura's voice was not too serious, and instead she was trembling lightly as if enduring something.

—Sakura. Is it really a prophecy?

—Oh, I'm exposed? I wonder if it's just my delusions. Because it seemed interesting. Not for Lilia though!

—Wait. You said it seemed interesting just now, didn't you?

—I didn't say anything like that! These are ungrounded accusations!

— You just said that, didn't you?

— I did say. I am sorry.

When Lilia lowered her voice, Sakura immediately admitted and apologized. Lilia sighed heavily, but she was not too angry because the other person was usually like that.

「Lilia? 」

Tina's voice brought me back, and giving a vague smile, I focused on Tina's questions.

I have been teaching Tina for a while. Tina seemed to know the basics, but when it came to application, she had difficulty comprehending. There were quite a lot of such problems, and I couldn't finish teaching in one day, so I decided to go through them tomorrow.

「I'm sorry. Lilia must also have your own studies... 」

「You don't have to worry about it, I don't have difficulty with so many areas. Now that you mention it, shouldn't you have been taught by Your Highness? I think his Highness will be happy too.」

This will confirm what Tina thinks of the prince. Thinking along those lines I asked that question.

「Eh, No」

—An immediate answer without any hesitation.

— Bufu! Instant rejection! Oh, hahaha, my stomach, my stomach is aching ...

—Sakura. You are laughing too much. I'm patient, so you should be patient too.

—Ku, Kuku...! Ha—ha. Kuku...!

Lilia desperately endured the urge to burst into laughter, but she composed herself so as not to appear strange in front of Tina.

「May I ask why?」

「Because! He's been saying terrible things about Lilia all this time! I am angry! 」

—You're adored, Lilia.

—I wonder why she puts me in a pedestal like this.

— Yeah. Why indeed.

Chapter 50

"It's almost time. Please put away the study materials."

The students started to put the study materials away. Seeing that everyone had finished cleaning up, the teacher began distributing two large sheets of paper to each seat.

The school conducted three exams in every semester, but the first two of them covered very few subjects. In exchange, they start in the morning and continue all the way till noon at a stretch. The teachers then finish grading in the afternoon and the results are announced the next morning.

In other words, the two pieces of paper that were distributed to Lilia just now contained all the problems for this exam.

— Good luck Lilia. *Fight* on Lilia. Hurray-Hurray-!

—Sakura. Noisy.

—Yup. I'm trying to get in your way.

—So that's it. I understand.

—Ah, I'm sorry, I was just kidding so put away the thoughts of bell pepper in your head!

[T/N: IDK why she hates capsicum. I love them]

The moment Sakura feels sense of crisis regarding this, she would always start vigorously apologizing with tears in her eyes. Lilia understood this well, and nodded her head while wryly smiling.

—Be quiet.

—Aye aye Sir.

What should be the answer? Lilia tilted her head downwards, flipped over the paper upon receiving the teacher's cue and started to solve the questions.

How much time has passed? She could still hear the crisp sound of writing from the surroundings. Lilia seemed to be the first to finish. At the end of her third re-check, Lilia casually sighed from boredom.

—Ah, Lilia. finished?

—Yes. It's enough for now.

—Let's go out. Immediately.

With a twitch, Lilia moved her eyebrows. Being slightly suspicious, she frowned and ask a question.

—Is it necessary?

—Yup.

Prompt answer without hesitation. Lilia nodded and raised her hand. After a while, the voice of the teacher could be heard.

"Huh? What is it Ardis. Did you drop something?"

Saying that, the teacher walked there. When the teacher arrived in front of her, Lilia spoke.

"Since I have finished, is it okay if I leave the room? Staying here is really boring."

The sound disappeared from the surroundings. Everyone gazed at Lilia with a surprised expression, and even the teacher was dumbstruck. After Lilia cleared her throat, she immediately recovered and showed a slightly embarrassed expression.

"Are you sure you are fine with that? There is still more than half the time left..."

Even though she was surprised to hear that there was so much left, Lilia still nodded with a smile.

"Yes, it's okay. I've done a solid review."

After saying that, the teacher squinted suspiciously and picked up Lilia's answer script. After going through it, her eyes slightly widened.

"Is there something wrong?"

"No... Nothing. Okay, I'll allow you to leave. You can't come back... well, even so that's fine."

"Yes. Certainly."

The teacher chuckled slightly at Lilia's self-confidence and returned to the table with Lilia's answer script. Lilia headed towards the doorway of the classroom with her paraphernalia. A few whispers could be heard, but they were ignored.

"Everyone, please do your best."

She showed a smile while saying so, closed the door of the room.

Lilia returned to her room and was greeted by a surprised Arisa. There were two cups on the table. Apparently she was drinking tea with someone. Looking around the room, there was no one, so the other person could be easily imagined.

"Is it the spy girl?"

"Yes, it is"

Lilia questioned Arisa who nodded obediently. Heading to the table, Arisa prepared her tea right away.

—Let's call the spy girl.

—Yes. Where is she?

— Ceiling.

As per the plan, Lilia wryly smiled, and struck the table twice. Gazing at the ceiling, she spoke.

"I'll give you permission to sit at the same table as me. Come down."

Saying so, she hit the table again. A part of the ceiling was displaced, and the girl appeared.

"Ah, that's... The same table...I am afraid it's..."

Lilia hit the table again without saying anything. Immediately after that, the girl trembled, and came down with a crying expression, shivering. Perhaps it was because of the pressure from silence, she sat facing Lilia while trembling. Alisa prepared her tea while suppressing her laughter.

"What are you so scared of?"

"Well, no, that, that, um..."

She started stammering, and a solid word could not be spun. Lilia waited for a while, but she gave up and sighed because she was just too impatient.

"The other day you were able to speak properly, weren't you?"

"That... Um at that time, I had received direct instructions, if it wasn't for that..."

"Is that how it is..."

Lilia sighed and drank tea. She nodded with satisfaction, and then tapped the table towards Arisa. Excuse me, says Arisa by the table.

"So? What's your name?"

"It's Cynthia."

"Cynthia. I'll remember."

Replying to that, Cynthia looked at her with frightening eyes. While she was wondering why she was so scared, there was a voice from Sakura who seemed to be trying to endure her laughter.

—If you're told by someone that they will remember your name, you can't help thinking that some punishment is waiting.

—Is that so? I didn't mean that.

She turned towards Cynthia. Cynthia gave discreet glances in Lilia's direction in order to discern her expression.

"Cynthia. Are you scared of me?"

"No, that's..."

"Then look straight into my eyes."

Chapter 51

Translated by: Niladri

Self-edited

[Recap: New character (secret agent ninja) stalking Lilia was caught and now getting interrogated]

Cynthia timidly met Lilia's gaze. Lilia nodded with satisfaction and then gave her an instruction.

"Take off your mask"

"...!"

Cynthia drew in a breath and her eyes swam rapidly. Realizing that her gaze moved towards the ceiling and back several times, Lilia also turned glanced towards it. Perhaps there was another secret agent there.

"You don't mind, right?"

Lilia directed the question towards the ceiling, but there was no reply. Seemed like it was fine. Lilia concluded and tapped the table to urge Cynthia.

"Uh... I understand..."

Cynthia took off her facemask, and not only Lilia but also Arisa's eyes were wide open.

The face belonged to a fresh, young maiden, with trimmed brown hair. She was probably younger than Lilia and perhaps even Arisa.

"Hey..."

Lilia muttered, appearing to be intrigued, while Cynthia's cheeks were flushed from embarrassment. She had earlier assumed that the purpose of the mask was to hide her face, but it seemed like she was just shy about exposing her face.

"Are you serving my brother?"

Listening to Lilia, Cynthia shook her head.

"I don't have a particular Lord yet. I accompany my father as an apprentice."

I see, Lilia nodded, and turned to Arisa. Arisa nodded as with understanding,

"I've heard that she's a genius appearing once a decade"

"Well, that's great."

Her gaze returned to Cynthia. The latter was looking down with a glowing red face.

—Lilia. {S}

—Yes. I want this girl. {L}

Considering her age, she might be lacking in experience. But if it was someone talented, she definitely wanted to grab hold of them.

"Cynthia. Do you have a Lord you want to serve?"

If she asked her brother, he may listen to Lilia's request. But she didn't want to obtain her through force. She wanted people who would follow Lilia from their own free will.

"No, not yet..."

"Yes. If so, serve me."

—It sounds like an order! {S}

—Oh, excuse me.

"Pardon me. I meant, why don't you serve me?"

Lilia's words made Cynthia look round. Her eyes seemed to once again dart to and fro from the ceiling. But there was no response. Cynthia bowed her head and spoke in a soft voice.

"Please let me think..."

"Yes. I understand. I'm not in a hurry, so think it over."

It was a little disappointing, but nothing else could be done at this point. Lilia finished up her tea and then slowly headed to the bedroom.

Lilia went to the library in the afternoon, but it seemed that Rei wasn't there. She just wanted to ask him how to teach someone, but with how things were, she went back to her room a little disappointed.

If you are not reading this at isotls.com/isohungrytls.com then this is stolen

That night, there was a visitor. Lilia, who was studying with Sakura in the bedroom, was called by Arisa to greet them. When she opened the door, there stood Tina flashing a big smile.

"Lilia!"

"Wha...!"

The instant Tina realized that it was Lilia, she immediately jumped and hugged her. Lilia stiffened a bit, but quickly regained her bearing and glared at Tina.

"It's dangerous. What are you doing?"

"Ehehe. I'm so happy!"

As she spoke, Tina was looking at Lilia with a big smile. Her face was very close because of their hugging posture. Lilia pushed Tina away, her cheeks slightly flushed.

"I will listen, so please sit down for the time being. "

Saying so, Lilia led her to sit on the table. Arisa immediately served tea.

"So? How was the exam?"

When asked this, Tina's smile deepened. The answer was obvious.

"Perfect score! Thanks to Lilia. Thank you so much!"

Saying so, this time she couldn't really hug because there was a table in between, but she took Lilia's hand on the table. Looking at Tina laughing happily, Lilia was able to feel a faint sense of accomplishment.

"Yes. That's very good. I wonder if you can let go now."

Tina continued holding Lilia's hand all this time. Rather than being released, Lilia felt Tina's grip growing stronger.

"A little longer"

"What is it..."

Lilia sighed, but she didn't feel that bad, so she didn't speak harshly.

—Embarrassed Lilia is so cute.

—I'm not embarrassed.

—Eh. Your face is red, right? Lilia is cute!

—.....

Saying something more appeared to be useless. Lilia could only let out a sigh.

—But you are my No. 1 best friend! I will not give you to anyone! {S}

—Oh, I don't think of you as my best friend.

—Eh..... Then, friends, I guess.

—Friends? Not really.

Sakura became completely silent after Lilia expressionlessly rejected her. Lilia frowned slightly, and Tina leaned her face even closer.

—I thought... Lilia was a friend...

—Wait up, you are crying from just this! ? Ah ah , I'm sorry, it was a joke! I think of you as a friend too!

Lilia panicked and apologized to when Sakura started crying. She didn't think it would be so effective.

— *Sniff*... I like Lilia...

—Yes. I like Sakura too. I think of her as an important friend.

—Ehe.

Apparently her mood seemed to have gotten better. She laughed gleefully, and

—By the way, Lilia.

—What.

—Lilia is simple.

Then she noticed it. Sakura's monkey play (acting).

—Sakura!

—Ahahahaha!

Chapter 52

Lilia sighed at the laughing Sakura's with an expression of helplessness. Then, when she suddenly looked up, she saw Tina anxiously staring at her. Unexpectedly, Lilia's cheeks were getting pulled.

—Your behavior was suspicious. Your facial expression was changing even though nothing happened. Scary, Lilia! {S}

—I wonder who caused all of this? {L}

—I'm sorry, I went too far. {S}

Lilia sighed inwardly this time and turned to Tina again.

"Lilia. Are you okay? Maybe you're tired ...? I'm sorry, I must have been bothering you."

"You don't have to worry about it. Saying I am not tired would be a lie, but everything else is fine."

I'm tired from dealing with Sakura. I'm not tired from my daily life.

—How terrible! {S}

Ignoring Sakura's words, she saw that although Tina didn't seem to be convinced, she silently sat back in her chair.

"Today you came just to inform me about the exam?"

"Oh yeah. I thought I had to inform you because I was indebted to you."

"Yes. Keep it up."

If Tina hadn't come, Lilia was thinking of visiting her tomorrow. Either way, tomorrow the results would be announced. She wanted to discuss it, so she would have met with her anyways.

T/N: Tina and Lilia were in different classes right? Hence the 1 day difference...

"Today we will all go to the dining room on the south side after this. Hey, Lilia ..."

"It isn't possible for me to go"

Tina lowered her eyebrows dejectedly, hearing that was the case.

Perhaps it is supposed to be a party to celebrate the test being over? Although it had nothing to do with Lilia, she never thought she would be invited. However, it was not possible to go to a gathering the south side with an unspecified number of people. If she waltzed into there carelessly, there would be endless problems.

—It's a troublesome world. {S}

—Yes. Really. {L}

Lilia returned to her bedroom after sending out Tina, telling her to bring souvenirs (from the party).

The next day. When Lilia went to the classroom, everyone looked uneasy. Lilia, who now understood those feelings, sat down in her seat with no change of expression on her face.

"Good morning, Liliane-sama"

The three people standing around her greeted. All of them seemed anxious, including Sera.

"Good morning. The three of you don't look too well. You had studied right?"

"Of course I did ..."

One would still be uneasy. Of course, depending on this grade, one might be reprimanded by their parents. It seems that some parents take the trouble to bring their children back to school in case they were skipping school. When one skips school for such a reason, it was something like putting the cart before the horse, Lilia just couldn't understand that feeling.

Lilia and another person, Chris were the only ones in the classroom behaving as usual. Chris was speaking boisterously to her entourage.

—Lilia. That is a role model. {S}

—Be like that? Me?

—Do your best!

Lilia turned towards those three people. The three tilted their heads and Lilia cleared her throat softly. And then-

"Good morning everyone, I'll give them out right away."

Being interrupted by the teacher who had arrived before the scheduled time, Lilia couldn't say anything. Sera and the others returned to their seats.

—Aww {S}

—Sorry..... Next time, I'll do my best ...

It may have been a necessary step in Sakura's plan. When Lilia apologized, Sakura laughed that it was okay.

—I didn't think you could do it suddenly either. Don't worry. {S}

—Yes Thank you.

Sakura didn't seem to care anymore and was wondering what to do next.

The teacher started to hand out the graded answer sheets to each person after the morning greetings. It seemed a little interesting to see reactions of students receiving it varying from joyful to depressed.

—By the way Lilia, what was your previous performance? {S}

—It was fifth in terms of ranking. It's neither good nor bad. {L}

—No, it's really amazing! It's not a joke! {S}

—If my grades don't improve, I won't be able to trust Sakura.

—Don't put that kind of pressure on me

Sakura was downcast, saying that she should have studied more. As a matter of fact, Lilia wouldn't actually blame Sakura, even if her grades were lower than last time. Because Sakura had given her knowledge that she would not have been able to obtain if she had lived normally.

Besides, it was just a "if" . Lilia was not worried at all.

"Aldis"

Having being called by the teacher, Lilia went up to the teacher's desk.

The teacher had a complex expression while looking at the answer sheet at hand, but then he turned towards Lilia and that expression disappeared.

"Well done"

It sounded like a heartfelt compliment. After receiving the answer sheet, she went through it.

"Phew"

—Oh! {S}

Lilia let out a faint sigh, and Sakura immediately chirped in a happy voice. Lilia might have screamed out loud if she hadn't been in a public classroom. She was really happy. She used to think that she didn't care about her grades, but she was honestly happy about this.

"Aldis"

Lilia raised her face when she was called by the teacher again. He also had a very happy smile on his face. No, it looked rather funny?

"I'm not going to conduct class today. I'll just explain the exam questions one by one."

"Yes, it's normal."

"That's right. That's why. You don't need it, so you can go home today."

If one didn't know anything, they would think that the teacher was trying to get rid of Lilia. However, it was easy to infer from the teacher's facial expression that this was not the case.

"Is it okay to leave straightaway?"

Anyone would have noticed that Lilia's cheeks were loosening. Lilia's smile was slightly stiff, making one think that she was trying to laugh. But soon, she bowed a little, displaying gratitude for the teacher's thoughtfulness.

"Then I gladly do as you say."

"Oh, be careful."

The teacher's mouth moved faintly that it was nearly invisible, and Lilia nodded and left the classroom.

Chapter 53

Lilia went straight to her room. Arisa was very surprised that her mistress came back early for two days in row, but she let it slide when she saw Lilia enter her bedroom. Lilia locked the door, and after getting confirmation from Sakura that there were no secret guards hiding in the room-

[.....woo!]

Lilia frantically suppressed her voice and let loose a silent cry of delight

— Sakura!

— Yeah! Great work, Lilia! Congratulations!

— Thank you. I wonder why, I'm really happy... This is my first time experiencing such happiness.

— Ahaha. You're exaggerating bit. But since Lilia is happy, I am happy too.

Although it may not really be as exaggerated, Sakura understood from her expression that Lilia was genuinely happy from the bottom of the heart. But that didn't matter. If the Lilia was able to convey her happiness even a little, it was good.

— Thank you, Sakura. This is all thanks to you. Thank you really.

— Ahaha. You are exaggerating. This was all thanks to Lilia's hard work!

— It's impossible for me to accomplish alone. I couldn't do it till now.

Lilia sat on the chair and put the transcript on the desk. When she looked at it, the angle of her mouth rose. She didn't think she would be this happy.

— Lilia. You look really happy.

— Yes. I'm really happy.

— Hmm...Then, Lilia deserves a reward.

Lilia tilted her head. Sakura claimed that she should reward herself, but should it really be like that? Moreover, her outstanding performance could be attributed to the knowledge that Sakura had shared with Lilia. If anyone should receive a reward, it should be Sakura.

— Well it would be a reward from me then. Lilia. I have a favour to ask of you.

— What is it? If you want to eat something, I can have it prepared at once.

— Waa, my resolution is shaking! But no, it's something else! But I want to eat strawberry Daifuku later!

— Being honest is good. We can go shopping later. So what is it?

— Ok. Lilia. Please take a nap.

Ha? Lilia involuntarily let out a cry of surprise. But Sakura's demeanor seemed serious. She actually wanted her to do so. She wondered why, but if Sakura wanted her to do that, she'll just follow her.

—You will wake up soon so no need to change clothes.

—Understood.

As Sakura asked, she lay down on the bed and proceeded to close her eyes.

「That, Lilia-sama... I was asked to report the results... If it's alright with you, could you please tell me...」

Towards the voice of Arisa by the door, Lilia turned her gaze. With her eyes closed, she spoke.

「First place」

「Eh... Ehh?! Is that true!」

「It's true. I'm tired so I shall sleep a little. I would prefer a bit of peace and quiet.」

「Ye- Yes! Good night!」

Upon hearing Arisa's excitedly retreating footsteps, Lilia slowly exhaled, wondering if it was really that surprising.

Was she more tired than she thought? Lilia quickly let go of her consciousness.

On the transcript that lay on the table in the desk. First place and the score was only one point short of full marks.

The point was deducted on a magic-related question, which Sakura couldn't teach.

When Lilia came to, she found herself in a dark room. She wasn't exactly sure whether it was a room or not. Darkness extended to the ends of the world as far as the eye could see. Lilia stood firmly on the ground, but even the earth was black and the short grass that grew in it was black as well. It is was a world dyed entirely with black, just with varying shades.

There was only one thing out of place in the black world. It was right in front of Lilia . A large tree stood there with pale pink flowers in full bloom. Lilia had never seen the real thing, but it must be a cherry tree.

Lilia looked at the cherry blossoms. Had she ever seen something this beautiful? When she stood there admiring it,

「Beautiful isn't it?」

Lilia jerked and turned back impulsively.

There stood a girl. She was more or less of same age as Lilia? It's just that her black colour-based sailor suit sharply contrasted with Lilia's clothes. Her Long black hair was tied up over her neck. Her eyes were black as well, and Lilia stood there staring at them.

「Uh, if you stare at them like that, I'll be embarrassed」

Ehehe, the girl laughed embarrassedly. Realizing something from the other person's voice and laughter, Lilia's eyes impulsively widened.

「Perhaps. Sakura?」

「Oh oh! Thank goodness! This is the first time we have directly met. Nice to meet you Lilia. I am Sakura.」

An innocent smile like a flower blossoming. Lilia naturally loosened her cheeks, but soon tilted her head.

「What is this place?」

「Ah... It's a bit hard to explain... Simply put, it's Lilia's spiritual world residing within your heart. In addition, I can only rent a small corner of this place in your mind.」

「I see. You must pay the rent then. 」

「Yes! But I'm afraid it would be too high...」

When she started to sound disappointed, Lilia gave a smile. Realizing that she was joking, Sakura sighed with relief.

「I am indebted to you. I don't care, you can use it as much as you want.」

「Really? Then double the width, no triple...」

「Don't get carried away.」

Sakura was surprised when Lilia poked her forehead. Suddenly she gazed at Lilia's face with her eyes wide open. Not expecting such a reaction, Lilia tilted her head.

「What's the matter?」

「Well... Nothing. Haha..」

Sakura gave off a fake laugh. But it sounded full of mirth. Lilia looked at the scene for a while, but soon turned her gaze.

「This tree is really beautiful. A cherry tree?」

「Yeah. The same name as me, the flower I like best. Do you like it?」

「Very much. Was this what you wanted to show me? 」

When she spoke while gazing at the cherry blossoms, she felt the person behind her give a nod.

「Yeah. I really wanted to show it to you. Also, umm... I wanted introduce myself」

「Right. It is the first time I am seeing you person. However, it doesn't feel like this is our first meeting.」

「I have always been by your side」

Looking back, this was actually the first time Lilia saw Sakura. It was normal because every time until now she could only hear the other person's voice. Rather, she never expected to see Sakura face to face.

Suddenly, she felt a weight on her back. When she looked back sighing, she saw that Sakura was hugging her.

「You're heavy」

「Mm-hmm! I'm not heavy! If possible, please let me stay this way. Do you know how long I have yearned for human contact... No, right?」

Listening to this, Lilia rolled her eyes. But when Lilia tried to reject her, it suddenly dawned on her.

Sakura's voice had always accompanied her. Even if it was quiet for a while, whenever she called her, the voice always responded. That meant it had always been here.

Except for this cherry blossom tree, she has been all alone in this monochrome back world. All by herself.

「It can't be helped then —」

After coming to this realization, Lilia didn't want to turn her down. Sakura who has always helped her, must have been lonely at this place. She should pamper her while she is here.

「Thank you, Lilia」

Lilia faintly smiled at Sakura's joyful voice. If she had a sister, perhaps it would be this kind of feeling? Although, a noisy sister like this would be troublesome.

「Um? Lilia, do you think I am being rude?」

「Now then, I wonder if I do.」

「Um... Well, I guess it's okay? I am having lot of fun with Lilia now!」

Sakura was hesitantly asking for permission. Lilia allowed it, thinking she was behaving like a dog or a cat rather than a sister.

While looking at Sakura, with a smile the other person couldn't see.

Chapter 54

As she woke up, Lilia stared absentmindedly at the ceiling for a bit before slowly getting up. After stretching, she got off her bed. Looking around, she was relieved to see color everywhere.

I wonder if Sakura is still all alone in that dark world...

[L] Sakura?

[S] Yea?

[L] Um... If you are alright with me, I can become your conversation partner so... reach out to me anytime, even at night.

Lilia waited for Sakura's response but only silence came back. As Lilia tilted her head, wondering what was wrong, Sakura replied uneasily.

[S] Sorry, your sentiments alone are enough for me.

[L] Why? It must be boring all alone.

[S] No no, just watching you is interesting enough... Ahh, don't worry about it.

[L] I heard you clearly, you know? Really now...

Lilia thought about letting herself go at her, but after seeing that place she couldn't bring herself to speak so strongly. Instead, Lilia sighed, pulled herself together, and continued.

[L] What's your reason why? Is there something there?

[S] Um well... Lilia, how is your body's condition?

What is she talking about all of a sudden, Lilia thought, furrowing her eyebrows, and then finally, she realized. *It can't be*, Lilia thought.

[L] Now that you mention it, it has been a bit tough but... it can't be...

[S] Yea, sorry. It's my fault.

Without realizing, Lilia's eyes widened and Sakura, seeing that, spoke again with a somber voice.

[S] Sorry. For not mentioning it earlier.

[L] I don't really mind but... what does this mean?

[S] Umm yea... I'm not too well-informed about it but... You might be thinking that I'm doing all sorts of things while you sleep but it's not that. If I had to say, it's like although your body is resting, your heart is still working. Of course, since your body is resting your stamina is recovering though. But, your heart that's always working hard can't exactly recover. Bit by bit, it becomes exhausted and in the end...

[L] In the end, what?

[S] Sorry. I don't know.

Lilia's face stiffened slightly. *We've come so far now but this is what it comes to huh*, Lilia thought. *Basically, we don't know what's the final risk.* That was the conclusion Lilia came to.

[L] Alright then.

[S] Huh?

[L] Up until this point, I have been in your care. I can allow you to cause me some inconveniences.

[S] Lilia...

Sakura's voice started trembling. With a bitter smile, Lilia stood up.

[L] Don't cry at something like this. If you ever get lonely, call out to me anytime.

[S] Okay... Thanks, Lilia.

Hearing Sakura's voice overcome with emotion, Lilia began to feel embarrassed. As she cleared her throat in a seemingly forced way, *It's time to go now*, Lilia thought, and headed towards the door.

[S] So hey, once a week, one hour before each day off. How's that?

Lilia stopped, her hand placed on the doorknob. After confirming Sakura was done speaking, she let out a soft sigh.

[L] I don't mind if it's longer you know.

[S] It's more than enough with that. You too, Lilia, if it ever gets tough tell me anytime.

[L] Yes. I know. Sakura, you too, speak freely to me anytime.

[S] Yeah... I'm happy. Thanks so much Lilia.

It was unusual to receive these heart-filled words of gratitude from Sakura. Feeling embarrassed, Lilia's cheeks began to redden but she couldn't hide it from Sakura so instead, she laughed sarcastically to cover it up.

As she opened the door, she found Tina and Chris sitting across each other at the table. Naturally, she was surprised at the unusual combination but she was even more surprised at the two of them cheerfully laughing together.

"Mistress Lilia, Good morning!"

Alisa, who noticed Lilia first, bowed respectfully. Without responding to Alisa's greeting, Lilia stared at the two sitting at the table and spoke.

"Alisa. What is that?"

"Ah, um... Right after Mistress Lilia took a rest, they came... They said they would wait over there until Mistress Lilia wakes up..."

Lilia let out a soft sigh and headed towards the two. As she headed over, they noticed Lilia and immediately stood up.

“Lilia! Are you okay? Are you unwell by any chance?”

The one who asked was Tina. Lilia shook her head with a smile.

“There is nothing of the sort. I was just taking a short rest. By the way, what are you doing here, Chris?”

“I was escorting Tina. Although, I myself have some business to handle here too.”

“I see. Let me listen then. What kind of business is it?”

“Well then, I will not go about this in a roundabout way... Mistress Lilia. What kind of tricks have you used?”

Chapter 55

Listening to the side, Tina who didn't understand the current situation tilted her head, puzzled. At first, Lilia also didn't know what Chris was going on about but immediately realized something. The results of the exam were just released so it was probably something in relation to that. Thinking from Chris' perspective, Lilia could guess what Chris was going to ask.

Probably about what "measures" Lilia took to achieve that score.

Chris probably didn't think it was through Lilia's own ability and Lilia understood that too. It wasn't possible to believe that someone could just raise their grades all of sudden like that.

It wasn't necessary for Chris to believe anything but still, deciding not to deceive her, Lilia stared fixedly at Chris.

"It was my own genuine ability."

Chris narrowed her eyes and observed Lilia intently. It was as if Chris was trying to ascertain the real truth from her but Lilia didn't feel particularly insulted from it. From the corner of Lilia's eyes, Tina was flustered about so Lilia waved her off, sending her a sign that everything was alright.

"I see, very well then."

Finally, Chris averted her gaze from Lilia and raised a smile to her face.

"You are amazing, Mistress Lilia. To speak truthfully, I doubted you. My apologies"

said Chris, bowing her head.

Lilia sniffed and waved her hand dismissively to show she didn't mind.

"If I were in your position, I too would definitely doubt them."

Lilia sat down in an open seat and took a sip of the black tea Alisa brewed for her. After savoring it slowly, she let out a breath.

"Even so though, how did you know my grades? Well, even if you do not answer I have a sense how."

"Eh, well... It is as you have guessed. I will say it for his Highness' honor but the one who asked was completely on me."

"I see. Well, if it's like that there is no problem. It is something you, Chris, would have eventually found out about anyways."

For the prince, it is obviously so, but Chris' parents too are in a position able to inspect the grades of the students. If it was a matter of finding out earlier or later, finding out earlier was not that much of a big deal.

"Does that mean that the Prince selfishly looked up Lilia's grade?"

“Miss Tina. It’s *Mistress* Lilia. I let it go last time but since I, an outsider, is here let us maintain some standards.

“Ah... I apologize. Mistress Crystal, Mistress Lilia.”

(T/N: Crystal is Chris. Previous translation group used Krystal/Kris.)

Tina bowed her head respectfully. Speaking of standards, first of all, entering a room without informing its owner is also an issue but Lilia decided to pretend she didn’t notice that.

“Tina. Do not worry, I believe that the Prince was, without ill intention, looking into it for this time only. Also, rather than checking my grades specifically, he was probably looking into who was the one that got better grades than him. If it was a promising individual, he probably wanted to put them under his wing while he can.”

“It is exactly what you have said. However, it resulted in him making a complex expression due to Mistress Lilianne. Yes, even I had a hard time suppressing a smile at that.”

Chris, amused, laughed sarcastically but also a bit apologetically.

“So? What did the Prince say then?”

“Nothing in particular. But, he wondered if Lilia really did nothing and just ordered me to confirm it.”

“Well, that is to be expected. Thank you for your hard work, Chris.”

As Lilia said this to Chris with a smile, Chris widened her eyes for a second and then let out a small sigh. Lilia tilted her head, wondering what was wrong, and Chris shook her head.

“Good grief. Mistress Lilia, you too, Miss Tina is here you know. Don’t you think you are being too informal?”

“Oh my, there is no one here who would care. Since there is no one else here but me, I will permit this.”

“You’re the same as ever huh... I understand that you’re trying to change yourself but it is better if you pay more attention to your speech and conduct you know.”

“That may be true. I will take that into account from now.”

Lilia accepted Chris’ words honestly. Chris seemed surprised at that, but this time, only narrowed her eyes a little and didn’t show any other reaction besides that. Now that her business was finished, Chris got up from her seat.

“Well then, I will return now.”

Saying that, Chris headed towards the door. Lilia thought about calling out to Chris but in the end, said nothing and simply watched her retreating figure.

“And so? Tina, how did you do?”

Tina, who was staring blankly in a daze, came back to her senses when Lilia called out to her. She tried to reply cheerfully, but, for some reason, her energy quickly dropped and she became dispirited. As Lilia knitted her brows in confusion, Tina spoke in a small voice.

“Hearing about Lilia’s grades... I feel shameful about being so cheerful... I think it might be good if I leave.”

“Before you leave, you must first reply properly. I will not let you remain silent on this when I was the one who tutored you.”

“Ah,” said Tina, at a loss for words, and finally let out a resigned sign. She quietly placed her report card and exam paper on the table. Looking at the papers, Lilia tilted her head.

“Eighth place. I believe that is good enough, no?”

“I received tutoring from Lilia though. I feel sorry because my grades aren’t higher...”

[S] How high is her goal that she doesn’t feel satisfied with this....?

[L] For a lower class noble, with this grade, it is more than enough though.

However, having ambition is a good thing. If Tina were satisfied with those results, Tina would stop putting in additional effort. Lilia felt sorry for Tina but decided to let Tina continue with her disappointed thoughts.

“By the way, what about Lilia? I think I have a sense from the previous conversation but...”

“I got first place.”

“Uwah... As expected of Lilia. As a friend, I’m so proud. In comparison though, I’m...”

“If you are not satisfied with your results, you can just study again next time. I’ll tutor you anytime.”

After Lilia had said that, Tina vigorously raised her head and began staring fervently at Lilia.

“Is that really okay?”

“Of course. Because.... because you are my friend.”

Lilia ended up saying the last part with a soft voice. Even so, Tina heard it clearly and her face brightened. As Lilia averted her gaze down, embarrassed, Tina laughed.

“Yea! I’ll be in your care then Lilia!”

“Ehh... Yes.”

After somewhat giving a reply, Lilia wondered if that was enough when Tina, as expected, laughed again.

Chapter 56

Lilia headed towards the library after Tina left the room. Her goal was, of course, Ray. She still hadn't heard about his test results. The solutions to the exam were open to all so as she walked over, she passed by a couple of students. All of them made way for her as they saw her.

[S] You've still got a ways to go, huh. Hey everyone, Lilia isn't scary! She won't bite you know?

[L] How rude... It can't be helped then. I'll talk to everyone firmly one by one...

[S] Stop that. Your conversations with the Prince are essentially bullying you know.

[L] How unfortunate.

Lilia was actually serious about it but it seemed like Sakura was against it. But then, Lilia hadn't thought about what to say to other students at all. Even if she were told to talk to them now, she wouldn't have been able to say anything.

As she opened the door to the library, a couple of students noticed Lilia and froze. They probably didn't expect Lilia to come here. Lilia, without saying anything to those students, continued to walk towards the entrance to the small room.

[S] Speaking of it, Lilia. You being at the library is a first.

[L] Huh? Aren't I always coming here?

[S] No, I mean you being seen here.

Being told that, Lilia realized and thought of something else too. Whenever she came and, of course, left the library, she was always doing so at times when there weren't that many eyes around. In the afternoon, she would bring over her lunch while everyone else was eating lunch and leave before classes ended. It was possible that today was the first time others saw her coming to the library.

[L] Do you think there is likely to be a problem?

[S] It's alright. Rather, let's have you appeal to them some more! If you show them yourself reading a book from the bookshelf, your intellectual image can...

[L] Books are to be read sitting down.

[S] Darn it, I didn't think you would say that.

As Lilia and Sakura were lightly exchanging words, she entered the room Ray usually used.

Like yesterday, no one else was in the room. The table had an exam result and sheet on it though so, unmistakably, Ray was just in here a few moments ago. Lilia sat down and looked over the exam sheet.

“Oh...?”

Ray was one grade level lower than Lilia. He was first place. From this, it appeared that Ray was continuously studying. She felt a bit proud but also, ended up tilting her head, confused.

Why wasn't he here?

[L] Sakura, do you know where Ray is?

[S] Sorry, as expected, I can't. At the very least, it seems like he isn't around the immediate vicinity.

Lilia sighed softly and stood up. If Sakura didn't know, there was nothing Lilia could do. She was a little worried but if there was nothing she could do, it couldn't be helped.

[S] Is this okay?

[L]

At Sakura's question, Lilia made a difficult expression. Sakura informed the troubled Lilia,

[S] Use what you can use!

[L] Yes, true... Let's use what I can.

Lilia nodded her head and left the room.

--

Lilia, who returned to her own room, walked over to the table and, following Sakura's instructions, shifted her gaze to the ceiling.

"I have a request I would like to make."

Saying that, a part of the ceiling moved and a man and girl stuck their face out. They came down in front of Lilia, and kneeled with their heads bowed. Lilia nodded her head, approvingly, and while looking at both of them in turn, spoke.

"Somewhere on these school grounds, there should be a boy here called Ray. Find him."

The two of them knitted their brows in confusion. "Why?" asked the man.

"Because he isn't in the library where he usually is."

Lilia answered concisely but the man shook his head again. He narrowed his eyes in confusion towards Lilia and said,

"What kind of person is this to Mistress Lilia?"

"Huh?"

"My apologies but, for us, our number one responsibility is to protect Mistress Lilia. It is not to assist complete strangers."

I see, said Sakura, understanding the situation. *What is the meaning of this?* asked Lilia, and Sakura explained.

[S] They mean that while they are here, they *will* follow Lilia's orders but above that, they must follow what they were ordered to do first.

[L] And that is to protect me?

[S] Yea. And if they have to go beyond that order, they can not act. Right now, since they are still doing background checks on those around you, if they exhaust even more personnel, they will not have enough to protect you.

In short, if they didn't have her previous order to follow, they would have been able to cooperate. Lilia regretted that she didn't cancel her previous order earlier but now it was too late. If these two couldn't act right now, then Lilia really did have no methods left.

Lilia closed her eyes and sighed softly.

[S] What are you going to do now?

[L] I will find him.

This was within school grounds. Tomorrow he might be back there. However, for some reason she couldn't leave it alone. The school grounds were vast but if she searches until nightfall, she might be able to find him.

Thinking that, she started to head over to the door when a voice called out.

“Please wait,”

Turning around, Cynthia took off her mask and fixed her gaze at Lilia.

“Cynthia. What are you doing?”

asked the man beside her with a stern voice. However, Cynthia, without responding, stared at Lilia firmly.

“Mistress Lilia, if I could say one thing.”

Although Lilia was tilting her head, confused, she turned to face Cynthia. Cynthia continued.

“Um, that person, Ray, to Lilia what kind of person is he?”

Does that really matter right now, wondered Lilia but still replied honestly.

“Lets see... A friend, perhaps? I do not know how he thinks though.”

“A friend is it. Just for that reason you, yourself, are willing to act?”

“Of course.”

For what incomprehensible reason is she asking this, Lilia thought as she glared but Cynthia appeared to be slightly smiling, delighted. Seeing Cynthia's unexpected expression sucked the malice out of Lilia and left her dumbfounded.

Chapter 57

“It’s as you’ve said, Alisa...”

“Right?”

Cynthia and Alisa exchanged smiles. Lilia tilted her head, confused, not knowing the meaning of their smiles.

“Mistress Lilianne Aldis.”

Cynthia called Lilia’s name. Lilia, surprised at the unusually serious expression and tone, met Cynthia’s eyes.

“I will serve you. I will offer up my loyalty to you.”

After having said that, in front of Lilia’s shocked eyes, Cynthia bowed her head deeply. For a moment, Lilia stood there, watching in surprise, before finally nodding.

“I am thankful, Cynthia.”

Lilia responded shortly.

“From now on, I will be in your care then.”

“Yes. Whenever, for whatever reason, please give me your orders.”

To Cynthia, who was still bowing her head, Lilia nodded once more. However, inside, Lilia was even more surprised and flustered.

[L] Why is this girl all of a sudden saying that she’ll follow me?

[S] Surely because she was charmed by your thoughts on friends!

[L] I don’t understand.

[S] Ehh....

Anyways, now it meant that Cynthia would move for Lilia’s sake. If that was the case, Lilia ordered Cynthia quickly.

“Well then, quickly, will you find Ray for me?”

“As you wish.”

Cynthia respectfully bowed her head, and, immediately after, disappeared into the hole in the ceiling.

“She’s become quite brave...”

Lilia said, seeing her off. At Lilia’s muttered words, Alisa and the man gave wry smiles.

“That is because she is very serious during her job.”

“If she wasn’t working, she would go right back to her previous state.”

If that’s how she is, what about it, Lilia thought as she sat down in her chair.

--

Unable to calm down, Lilia drank the black tea Alisa brewed while waiting for Cynthia. Lilia wanted to go find him too herself but was stopped by Alisa, as he could be a spy for all they knew. *Waiting for a report will just use up time*, Lilia thought when Sakura also stopped her. *Just be patient and wait here like an adult*.

Just how long have I been doing that, Lilia thought. As Lilia finished up her second cup of tea, Cynthia finally returned.

“I have returned.”

“Welcome back. So, where is he?”

Lilia tapped her fingers on the table while Cynthia took out a map of the school from her chest pocket. She laid it out on the table and pointed out a marked dot. It was the school’s top floor hallway.

“Why is he in this kind of place?”

Lilia tilted her head, confused, and Cynthia’s face became grim. While continuing to tilt her head, puzzled, Sakura spoke.

[S] Lilia. I think you should hurry over.

[L] Is that so?

[S] Probably.

If Sakura thinks so, then I should go, thought Lilia, nodding in agreement, and got up. She headed for the door after memorizing the location exactly.

“Mistress Lilianne, are you going there?”

At Cynthia’s words, Lilia stopped, looked back and nodded. Doing so, Cynthia also nodded in return, replying,

“As you wish. Please let me accompany you. However, unless you order me otherwise, I will act by prioritizing Mistress Lilianne’s safety first, is that alright?”

“Yes. I don’t mind. Well, let us go then.”

Cynthia nodded and disappeared once again into the hole in the ceiling. Lilia faced the door again, heading out.

Lilia, alone, walked over to the school building’s highest floor. On the way, as expected, the students she passed by made way for Lilia.

[S] This is amazing. She's moving around unnoticed by all these students! She's a ninja, a Kunoichi!
(T/N: Kunoichi - female ninja)

[L] I don't really know what you mean by Kunoichi but... she is following me, yes?

[S] Yea. At a reasonable distance. I heard she was talented but even so, wow.

(T/N: Kunoichi - female ninja. Thought it would put a better emphasis on Sakura's excitement with female ninjas by leaving it in Japanese. Also Lilia doesn't know what a Kunoichi is either.)

Lilia had no idea what Sakura was saying but understood that it seemed like Cynthia was following along properly. Cynthia said she wasn't particularly good at fighting but Lilia was reassured since it was better than being alone at least.

After walking a bit, they reached the stairs, and as they got close to their destination, she heard,

"Hurry up and walk! The sun is going to set!"

Instantly, Lilia stopped moving. The voice was coming from just around the corner. The other students in the area were throwing their gazes elsewhere, and, not wanting to get involved, were hastily trying to move away.

Lilia tilted her neck forward to peer around the corner. And then, she saw it.

Ray, holding a massive amount of books, was wobbling forward. Around him were five empty-handed students. Three boys and two girls. All of them had unpleasant smiles and kept attacking Ray with their words.

"Would you hurry up, *Teacher Ray*? You're going to teach us how to study, right?"

"We even borrowed a classroom from the teacher so hurry up, yea?"

First it was the boy with the largest build and then the girl, snuggling up close with him while speaking with a condescending tone. Ray said nothing and walked on silently. He walked on, desperately trying to hold on to the mountain of books that were stacked taller than himself.

"I see..."

Lilia unconsciously laughed at herself. Seeing that, Lilia immediately understood that Ray was getting harassed. At the same time, she also felt ashamed of herself.

That boy harassing Ray was Lilia, and Ray was Tina.

[L] Certainly, seeing that as an bystander is nothing but unpleasant...

[S] Lilia, let's leave the regrets for later, yea? I'll listen to you later as much as you want then.

[L] Yes, you are right. Thanks Sakura.

Lilia smiled thinly and then erased all emotion from her face. She came out from the corner and faced them. Noticing her, the surrounding students became startled and staring at her with wide eyes, hastily let way for her.

The first one that noticed was the weakest looking male student amongst the five. He was jeering at Ray, but after Lilia entered his field of vision, his face froze.

“W-Why...?”

Two others in the group also noticed Lilia after hearing him and froze. Although just before they were making fun of Ray and laughing, now they were just frightened students.

The boy with a large build and the cuddling girl still didn't notice Lilia. The other three couldn't speak.

Lilia moved to stand beside Ray, and finally, the final two noticed.

Chapter 58

「What are you all doing, I wonder?」

Lilia's voice echoed in the hallway. It was a very calm and mellow voice. Someone nearby let out a scream, but that didn't matter. Lilia was quietly looking at the five people in front of her.

「Wh- Who are you ...」

The boy with a big build spoke with a trembling voice. Apparently he didn't know about Lilia. She was a little surprised at that, but again, it didn't matter.

「I-Idiot. It's Liliane-sama. Liliane Aldis-sama.」

The woman moved beside him and whispered in his ear. Lilia could hear it because the hallway was completely silent.

「Which Liliane ... A-Ah, that ...?」

Even if he didn't know Lilia's face, he seemed to be well aware of her notoriety. Normally Lilia preferred to clear up her infamy, but she decided to freely wield it this one time.

「Lilia-san ...?」

Rei's weak voice sounded. It was a very faint voice, so it seemed that only Lilia could hear it. Without glancing at him, Lilia continued to stare at the boy with the big build.

「This, it has nothing to do with the Duke's family! What are you doing here!」

Lilia's squinted her eyes were squinted and the five¹ people around her turned pale. If he knew of Lilia's infamy in a little more detail, he wouldn't be able to say these words.

「I just wanted to pass through here ...」

The corners of Lilia's mouth rose upwards. It was a very joyful smile, but of course it didn't bring them any relief.

「I wonder who you think you are talking to?」

Lilia slowly walked up to her big student. He should be younger than Lilia, being in her same grade as Ray, but he was a boy, and his physique was bigger than Lilia. Nevertheless he was still trembling, utterly frightened.

「No, that ... I2 was ...」

「It seemed like you all were bullying this kid ...」

「That ... we were just playing with him ...」

「Playing? I see, playing eh...」

Lilia nodded as if she was convinced. Lilia smiled gently as she saw the five people in front of her nodding several times in agreement.

「Then let me play as well」

The five people stopped moving. The facial expressions of the five people were dyed in despair. As she smiled and slowly approached, they were afraid of what she would do.

「What's going on here?」

A voice arrived from behind the five people. Lilia clicked her tongue inwardly to that voice.

The prince walked forward towards them. Beside the prince, there was a student who looked a little younger and another student in the same classroom as Lilia.

—I failed ...

If anyone saw this without knowing anything, Lilia would definitely seem like the bad guy. Even Lilia herself would think so. She tried to gather her thoughts, she should at least protect Ray, but Sakura sneaked in and said with a laughing voice.

—It's okay, Lilia.

—It 's okay What do you mean?

In front of Lilia, whose mind was filled with confusion, the prince looked at the seven people one by one. The five people with bright, hopeful expressions, Lilia, and finally Ray. He gave Lilia a stern look, as if trying to say that he understood everything.

「Liliane」

「What is it?」

She wondered what he would say. But the prince's words were not what she expected.

「Bring the boy next to you here. I am sure you won't feel conformable being with them」

Lilia opened her eyes wide and was completely dumbstruck. She immediately recovered when Sakura called to her, but she exposed a very stupid expression. Lilia quickly erased her expression and she reached out to Ray.

「You can stand up, right?」

「Ah, yes.....」

Ray stood up, taking Lilia's hand. And as they passed by the five people, they stopped for a bit. Lilia smiled at the five people who were extremely wary.

「I'll take this kid. This kid is mine from now on. I won't tell you not to touch it, but think twice before doing so in the future.」

All five nodded heavily to Lilia's words. Then, Lilia just passed by.

The prince who greeted Lilia had a look of dismay. But he said nothing, and turned his eyes to the five again.

「Well, do you have anything to say?」

The two female students tried to mutter some excuse to the prince,

「I forgot to say, but I've heard about what happened already. I won't stop you from lying, but be prepared for the consequences.」

In the end, no one said anything and everyone remained still where they were.

After that, no one said a word for a while. Eventually, the prince sighed lightly and gave instructions to his classmates who came with him. After he had finished speaking,

「Yes, Understood.」

That person politely acknowledged and headed towards the students. The prince didn't wait to see the result and turned to Lilia and her friend.

「Let's go」

Saying that, the prince led the way. For Lilia, it seemed like a way out of this situation. She wanted to leave quickly, but it would be difficult to ignore the prince, so she reluctantly followed him.

He guided them to an empty classroom on the first floor. The prince first entered the quiet classroom,

followed by Lilia and Ray. After confirming that they had entered, the prince closed the door of the room. He locked tightly and walked to the back of the room. Lilia was a little further away, and she followed.

「Now」

The prince spoke a word and stood still. And he turned around and glared at Lilia.

—I wonder what he will say this time?

—Regarding?

「Liliane. Thank you for this matter. Thank you.」

Saying that, he bowed his head. Not only Lilia but also Sakura seemed to be surprised at this, and both of them were rendered speechless.

And the prince glared at Ray this time. Ray also returned the prince's glare. His gaze was stronger than usual. And when Lilia was frozen in place, the prince opened his mouth.

「What are you doing, Rayford?」

「No, I was just bullied.」

Chapter 59

While saying that, Ray shrugged. Although it was a familiar voice, it lacked the usual demureness. Lilia and Sakura were really surprised that he used such a tone against the prince.

「As you can expect, was my first time being bullied like this. I see, it indeed feels bad.」

「First of all, you were the one who created this situation. Why did you come to study so far abroad?」

「No, haha... It's kinda hard to talk about it ...」

Lilia was left behind as the conversation between the two proceeded. Of course it did not appeal to Lilia. Therefore, it was inevitable that Lilia would narrow her eyes and let her anger drip out.

The first person her gaze stabbed was the prince in front of her.

「Ah ... Liliane? What's wrong?」

The prince's cheeks were stinging, but of course he didn't know why. As Ray tried to look back at Lilia, Lilia grabbed his shoulder.

「Hi ...!」

Rei let out a short scream, perhaps because he felt a piercing sensation. He slowly turned towards Lilia.

「Um ... Lilia-san? What's wrong?」

A deliberate performance that seemed to be somewhat hastily improvised. In response to it,

「I'll give you a chance to explain.」

Even the prince, upon hearing Lilia's anger-infused low voice for the first time, grew pale.

Lilia sat in a chair, and Ray sat directly on the floor opposite to her. He was trembling pitifully, but she just kept watching from a distance while giving off the feeling that she wouldn't appreciate the prince's intervention.

「Well, before anything else, a formal introduction is needed, right?。」

「Enough with the empty formalities. I am already very annoyed.」

「Yes! I'm sorry!」

He bent his waist and apologized loudly. Her complexion remained pale.

—I understand your feelings, but let's be a little more gentle.

—But I am already as gentle as possible?

—Ah, ahaha ... Yup. Just a reminder ...

Lilia could hear Sakura's bitter, acquiescing smile as, but Lilia ignored it. She put a lot of strength into her gaze at Ray and urged him to continue with the movement of her chin.

「Oh, uh ... As I was saying ... I'm Rayford Clavires. You know Clavires, right?」

「It's a neighboring country. Does that mean that it's your family name?」

「Yeah. I'm the third prince. I also have the right to succeed to the throne, but since my brother's positions are solid, I'm like an extra spare.」

Even so, it seemed that he was a genuine royalty. Well, Lilia nodded and she stood up. She politely bowed her head and said-

「I was unaware, and I sincerely apologize for the rudeness so far, Prince Rayford. 」「

「Eh ... No, that's Lilia-san, this isn't it ...」

「As this is a meeting between royalties, I'll excuse myself first ...」

「Wait, wait! I'm sorry I apologize for keeping it a secret, so please don't go!」

He grabbed Lilia's sleeve, and when she looked back, he tearfully begged her. Lilia glanced at Ray, she inwardly clicked her tongue so that it was clearly audible to the two men, and sat down on the chair again. Ray sighed with relief, and the prince covered his eyes with his palm so as to avoid a scene like this. Lilia aimed her gaze at her prince, and she glared.

「Your Highness」

「What is it?」

「Why are you acting like this doesn't concern you? If you had introduced this person properly, it wouldn't have turned out like this.」

「Well, that's right. But Liliane, this was Rayford's wish. He wanted to see what the school was like as an ordinary person. Well, as a result, he was harassed and stayed cooped in the library. But ...」

「You couldn't tell me either? It's like that it's like that, I see I see.」

Lilia smiled sweetly. And then uttered these words.

「I'll keep this in mind.」

「...tch!」

The prince was rendered speechless and stayed silent. Lilia wondered why he was trembling just because she said she would keep it in mind, but she moved her gaze towards Ray.

—Hey, Lilia are you for real? Do you really not understand?

—What is it? Suddenly this idiot is just trembling.

Sakura groaned while holding her head, but Lilia still didn't understand why so she didn't bother with it any more.

「So? How should we act going forward?」

Lilia understood everything and Ray answered with a tense smile.

「If possible, keep everything like before ... Please ...」

「All right, then I'll do that.」

Ray, who heard it, let out a sigh of relief. Her “keep this in mind” seemed to be a sign of acceptance.

「If possible, I would like you to continue helping with my studies as usual ...」

Her request was unexpected. Ray hurriedly nodded but then she frowned.

(Ray)> 「Of course I understand you must be busy. If if you don't have time, it's okay ... 「」

「I don't mind ... I could hire someone else in your place to help with my studies.」

Thanks to Sakura, Lilia was able to gain her knowledge in her own way. But that didn't mean she (Lilia) was good at studying. She thought it would be much more efficient to hire someone else for the job, but Ray vigorously shook his head.

「I like Lilia-san」

Rei spoke, looking straight at Lilia's eyes. Sakura made a happy voice, and the prince widened his eyes in the corner of Lilia's field of vision. Lilia saw those reactions and tilted her head.

「Well, that's fine.」

That was it.

—Ah, yeah. It can't be helped because it's Lilia.

—What? What do you mean?

—It's nothing. never mind.

She was not quite convinced, but even if she pursue it, the other person Sakura wouldn't answer. She was a little concerned, but she gave up as well.

「But I was surprised too. I didn't think Lilia-san was Liliane Ardis.」

「No, normally anyone would easily notice it.」

The prince said amazed, and Lilia reluctantly nodded with agreement. She groaned, because.

「I wasn't born in this country. I can't help if I don't understand.」